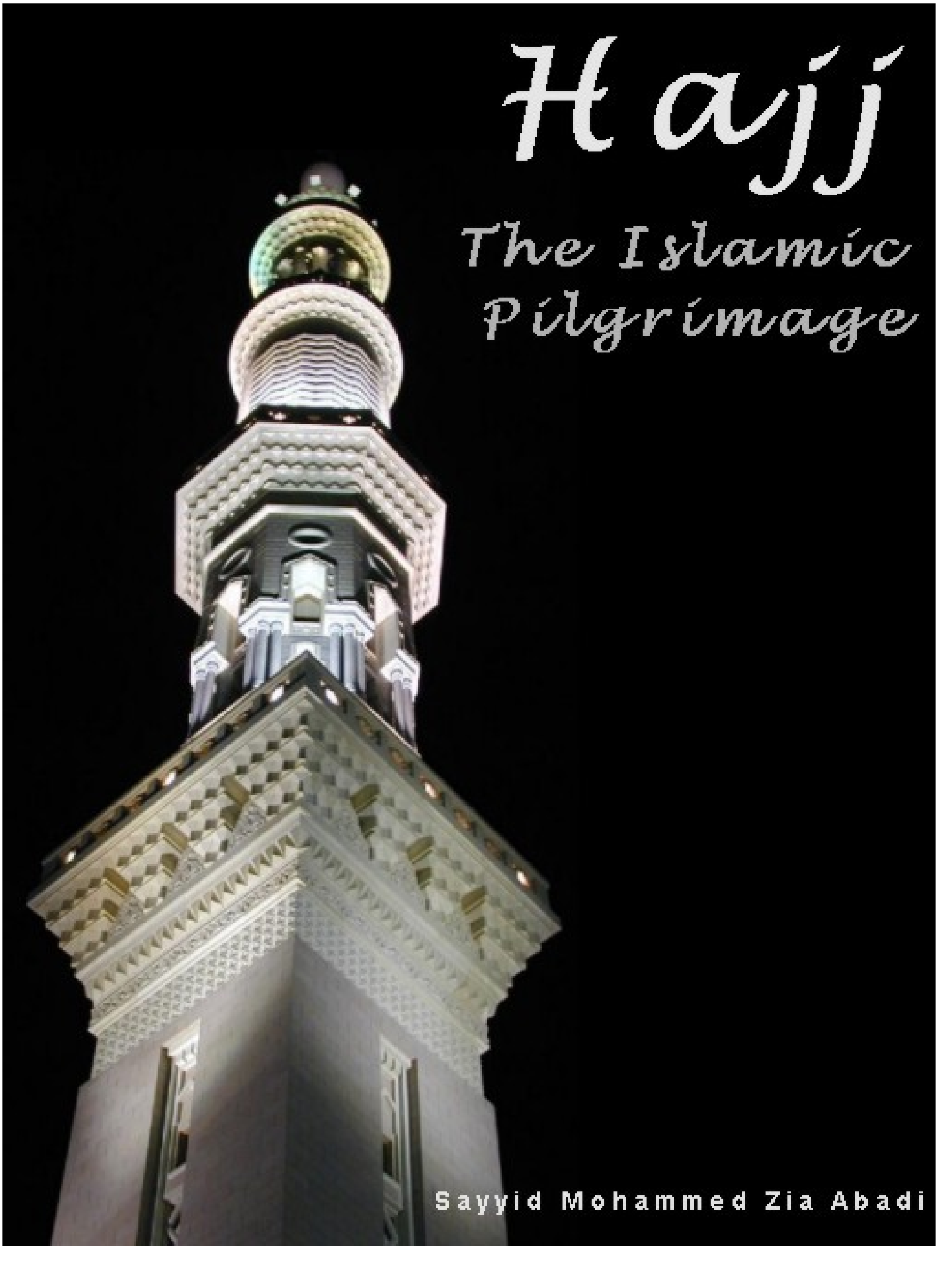

Hajj
The Islamic Pilgrimage
Sayyid Mohammed Zia Abadi

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Hajj - The Islamic Pilgrimage

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Published by:
Ansariyan Publications, Qum
The Islamic Republic of Iran
ISBN 964-438-358-3

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Translators Note

In The Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful

All Praise Is Due To Allah, The Lord Of The Worlds. May The Peace And Blessings Of Allah Be Upon Mohammad And His Pure Progeny.

This is the third book of its kind I have translated into English for Ansariyan Publications. The other two books are *Uddatul Da'i* by Allama Hilli and *Ethos of Prophets* by Taaj Langaroodi.

It is an honor for me to translate a book into English on Hajj, a religious duty that prepares man for his spiritual journey towards God. The present book not only discusses the physical acts of Hajj rites but also elaborates on the spiritual and mystical aspects of this divine ritual, which has greatly impressed me. Like a mystic poet who has to go through seven cities of love, namely quest, love, gnosis, detachment, unity, amazement, and finally annihilation in order to become united with the Beloved, the pilgrim of God's house too has to go though seven stages similar to the seven cities of love in order to be received by God.

This book can serve as a handbook for the pilgrims who wish to have more knowledge about the physical and spiritual aspects of Hajj.

The translation of this book is dedicated to the souls of my parents, Safar Ali Aghili and Roghayyeh Aghili as well as my sister, Ghamar Aghili, may their souls rest in peace forever.

Aghili Ashtiani

Introduction

Praise is due to Allah who made the House a pilgrimage for man and a place of security. Greetings of Allah be upon Mohammad; the chosen messenger whom Allah has sent as witness, bearer of good tidings, warner, and to “call people to Allah, with His permission, and the bright lamp.” And greetings be upon the members of his household from whom Allah kept away the uncleanness and purified a thorough purifying.

In this materialistic world, man’s spiritual assets are being plundered. The sublime spiritual virtues, being the only source of man’s dignity and a criterion for humanity, have lost their values and are gradually being removed from man’s life. A beastly atmosphere is turning the world into a quagmire. The freedom-fighting and hearty human beings are naturally living in depression under such circumstances. Like taking breath in a polluted environment, living has become painful for them. Hence, they are always looking for a chance to hear a heavenly and divine call amidst the mammonists’ yellings so that it will remove fatigue from their lives and depression from their hearts, take them to a world above this boring one, and satiate them with the elixir of affinity with God, prophets, and saints. That is the call of the Hajj pilgrimage and the call of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (a.s) [1], which generates much enthusiasm in the ummah – Muslim community- with the coming of the Hajj rites.

Enthusiasm in the hearts and spirits of the believers who rush to the Ka’aba [2] — the House of their Beloved, fills Mecca’s plain and mountain with *Labbayk Allahumma labbayk* (Yes, here I am, O Lord, here I am). Bare-footed, they shed off all worldly attachments and signs of distinction, reach for the House of their Beloved, embrace it,

circumambulate it, voice their love from the bottom of their hearts, confide their grievances with God, hear the soothing answer of the Lord of the House, and return home with a spiritual joy.

Nevertheless, attaining the life-giving impact of religious acts in general and the Hajj rite in particular depends on full attention to the philosophy of these great heavenly instructions, or an act devoid of spirit will evidently not yield any sublime socio-humane result. Perhaps one can assert that the main reason we, Muslims, are deprived of the effects of our religious instruction is lack of attention to the spirit of divine laws. We are only content with their external forms. We notice that certain Muslims go to perform Hajj and Umrah. They know the Hajj rites very well but, amazingly, there is neither revolution in them in terms of evolution of spirit and connection with God nor have they been disciplined from the viewpoint of social relations and rights of human beings.

In the same way, they are deprived of spiritual effects of such other religious acts as prayer, fasting, visiting the holy shrines, mourning for Imam Hussein (a.s) and holding sessions or learning the Holy Qur’an and other religious rites.

Having the greatest intellectual and spiritual assets, this deprivation of sublime human virtues is regrettable, for it has no justification other than failing to know the truth of Islam and the spirit of the Qur’anic teachings. It is regrettable to see that Muslims work hard to learn about issues related to prayer, the rules of reciting the Holy Qur’an but fail to learn about the spirit of prayer and the aim behind this divine injunction to nourish their soul in the light of those injunctions, to make their heart turn into a mirror to reflect God’s manifestations and to purify their individual and social life from the

filth of all vices thanks to prayer.

It is seen that Muslims perform prayer, take part in congregational prayers, invoke, and supplicate, but remembrance of and spiritual attention to God and abstinence from indecency and evil, which are the ultimate goal of prayer, are missing in most worshippers. The prayer of most people is mixed with wrongdoing and is not different from ignoring God and not praying attention to Him. This is because we have failed to understand the ultimate goal of prayer as part of our religious program. Rather, we consider the ritual prayer and its external form as criterion for being religious.

The same detrimental negligence is seen in Hajj pilgrimage but more conspicuously. Those who intend to go on Hajj pilgrimage do not forget to take with them the smallest things they may need during the trip nor fail to learn some of the rites related to the state of Ihram, [3] Tawaf, [4] Sa'y [5] and Ramy. [6] Nevertheless, they are so ignorant of the spirit of Hajj and the ultimate goal of this divine journey that they will never discuss with anyone nor consider it as default.

Getting to know that truth and materializing those objectives in their hearts and on the scene of action is not part of the Hajj rites. The only thing the performer of Hajj has been asked to do seems to be to wrap himself in two pieces of cloth, to say *Labbayk*, [7] to go round the House, to walk between Safa and Marwa, to shave his head, to offer sacrifices, to throw pebbles at Satan, and to return home with trunks filled with gifts! It is for this reason that among those who have performed Hajj Umrah and those having visited the shrines of the Holy Prophet (saw) [8] and the Imams (a.s), many deviations, impious acts, and undisciplined behavior, which have no conformity

with the spirit of Hajj rites, are seen. It therefore becomes evident that most of those who have gone to Mecca have failed to understand the spirit of Hajj and the aim behind it. Hence, they are engaged in contradictory acts.

We, Muslims, are duty-bound to submit ourselves to the sublime Qur’anic teachings and try to comprehend the humane objectives of those wise and heavenly injunctions far more than the externals of religion. Elaborating on the sublime objectives of the Hajj rites, Imam Sajjad (a.s) while meeting a man who had performed Hajj rites posed the following questions:

Were you thinking of abandoning sin and living a pious life until the end of your life when you got into the state of Ihram and saying *Labbayk*?

Did you pay attention to the aim of the act you were doing?

Were you such and such in Tawaf, Wuquf, al-Mashar, Ramy, and Mina while you were shaving your head and offering a sacrifice?

The man’s answer was ‘No’. Then the Imam (a.s) said: Since you have not performed those acts to materialize their objectives, actually you have not performed Hajj, that is to say, the results of the Hajj rites have not been obtained. In this case, you neither reached Mina, nor did you throw these pebbles on Satan, nor did you shave your head, nor did you performed the rituals of the Hajj, nor did you offer prayer in Kheif Mosque, nor did you performed Tawaf al-Ifadha, nor did you offer sacrifice for the Lord. Go back, you did not perform Hajj.” [9]

Therefore, every Muslim who intends to go on Hajj is duty-bound to pay full attention to its inner objectives in addition to learning about the externals of this great religious duty according to the jurisprudents' –*fuqaha*- decrees found in practical laws of Islam –*Risala*-, so that the visitation of God will leave an indelible impression on his hear that has turned into God's House and a center for His remembrance.

In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: "*So when you have performed your devotions, then laud Allah as you lauded your fathers, rather a greater lauding.*" (2:200)

This book, which consists of quotations from the Holy Qur'an, the hadiths of the Holy Prophet and the immaculate Imams (a.s), the decrees of the religious authorities as well as my own opinion on Hajj, is dedicated to Imam Mahdi (may Allah expedite his reappearance).

Sayyid Mohammad Zia Abadi

Notes:

[1] (a.s) stands for 'peace be upon him/her/them'

[2] The Ka'aba is the square-shaped building in the centre of the Great Mosque in Mecca, in the direction of which Muslims must face in doing the obligatory prayer.

[3] Ihram, being one of the rites of Hajj, is (1) The sacred state into which a Muslim must enter before performing a pilgrimage (Hajj), during which sexual intercourse, shaving, cutting one's nails, and several other actions are forbidden, and, (2) the costume worn by a Muslim in this state, consisting of two lengths of seamless usu. white fabric, one worn about the hips, the other over the shoulders or sometimes only over the left shoulder.

[4] Tawaf, being one of the rites of Hajj, is the circumambulation of the

Ka'aba—the Holy House of God.

[5] Sa'y, being one of the rites of Hajj, is the running between Mount Safa and Mount

[6] Ramy, being one of the rites of Hajj, is throwing seven stones, thrice, on an emblem representing Satan.

[7] *Labbayk –or Labbaykah-* is the *talbiya* –one of the pillars of the Hajj- the obligation of which is a matter very much discussed by the ulema, yet they did not reach consensus. *Labbayk*, however, means: Here I am at your service.

[8] (saw) stands for 'peace be upon him and his family'

[9] See *Mustadrak al-Wasaail*; vol. 2 p.186, Section 17, Hadith 5

The Purpose of the Acts of Worship

The purpose of acts of worship is to draw man's attention to the privilege he has in the universe. That purpose is achieved by fully recognizing the Creator of the universe, having a spiritual journey towards Him, shedding off of all kinds of material pollutions from oneself, being illuminated with God's light, and being absorbed in infinite joy as a result of affinity with God Who is Absolute Beauty and Infinite Perfection.

This requires belittling the worldly pleasures against the pleasure of affinity with God hence being indifferent to fortune and misfortune in the world. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you…"* (57:23)

This is the virtue of being pious and detached from the world, which is the outcome of getting to know God and man's full attention to a metaphysical world.

The Islamic piety is not against the principles of everyday life.

When the topic of piety and detachment of the world comes up and quotations from the Holy Qur'an or the Imams (a.s) are mentioned, a kind of misunderstanding is created in the minds of certain people. They will say to themselves that these two contradict each other. Islam—the perfect religion, while inviting people to be pious and detached from the world, has taken every aspect of human life into consideration. It is against seclusion, irresponsibility to social undertakings, and indifference to the events happening in the human society. Islam equally blames the oppressors and the

oppressed as the agents behind the spread of oppression and corruption. They are both entitled to punishment. The Hoy Qur'an depicts the assembly of the two groups in hell: *"Whenever a nation shall enter, it shall curse its sister, until when they have all come up with one another into it; the last of them shall say with regard to the foremost of them: our Lord! These led us astray; therefore give them a double chastisement of the fire. He will say: every one shall have double but you do not know.*" (7:38)

Piety, meaning lack of interest in the worldly affairs in one's mind and hear and abstinence from pleasure seeking in practice, is the outcome of a kind of enlightenment in one's soul in a way that man sees the world as transient and subject to decline. As a result of such an insight, man considers his personality as one created for eternal life hence finding himself too dignified to have tendency towards a mortal, material life. The leader of the pious, Imam Ali (a.s), in sermon No 32 of *Nahjul Balagha,* says: "How bad is the transaction that you allow, (the enjoyment of) this world to be a price for yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allah for you"

That is to say, man's human personality and the eternal life of the Hereafter is so sublime that if he loses the two but gains the whole world, it would be a bad transaction. The pious man finds his prosperity and his ultimate goal in the illuminated world of affinity with God and His pleasure. In this relation, Imam Sajjad (a.s), in the eighth part of the Whispered Prayed of the Devotees, says: "For my aspiration has been cut off from everything but You and my desire has turned toward You alone, You are my object, none other; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness. Meeting You is the gladness of my eye, joining You is the wish of my soul. Toward You is my yearning, in love for You my fervent craving. Your good

pleasure is the aim I seek." [10]

Quoting Imam Sajjad (a.s), Abu-Hamza ath-Themali, says: "O Master Lord, in Your remembrance my heart takes delight, with prayers I hold communion with You, it freezes the pain of fear that torments me." [11]

A pious man is not one who does not possess anything but one who is not slave of anything.

Therefore, a pious man is a sublime soul released from the humiliating, materialistic captivity and soaring in the infinite space seeking God. Such a man has become familiar with supernatural pleasures. His joy and sorrow depends on that type of pleasure, not on worldly pleasures, which are little provision and exposed to rapid annihilation. Therefore, when a man reaches that stage of spiritual perfection to find himself above the world and its desires, he will never become captive of carnal desires. He neither violates other people's rights nor allows them to violate the rights of other human beings. Acting on the basis of his religious duty, such a man is steadfast in preserving his own rights and those of others in defending justice, and will not spare his life in the path of God.

The vivid lives of the Imams (a.s), and at the top of them the life of Imam Ali (a.s), is good examples. Being at the zenith of piety and detached from the world both physically and spiritually, Imam Ali (a.s) displayed to the world the highest degree of respect for other people's rights, defense of social justice, and proved consistency of piety with living a social life and a sound way of living.

Summary

A spiritual virtue, which makes man's real personality outstanding and in the light of which man's Hereafter and worldly life becomes meaningful is piety, an outcome of man's heart being illuminated with the light of God's cognition and man's affinity with God. This is not possible except by worshipping Him ad performing what is known as religious duties. The present decadence is due to man's failure to know himself. The reason why corruption has spread throughout the world, the human society has been entangled in the bottleneck of a bestial life, and there is no way out is because man has failed to recognize his own stand. He has been deviated from acts of worship and God seeking path, which is his special task. Man's big sin is failure to get to know himself, which will lead to knowledge of God.

Being a Servant of God Is Man's Dignity

The fact that God has assigned acts of worship for human beings is a sign of God's grace towards man. By calling man to His House and by giving him the honor of being called the servant of Allah, God has made man distinct from other creatures. If human beings could only understand what dignity this title gives, they would ignore all the worldly titles and would not think of anything other than qualifying for that title. When man becomes servant of God, his heart will be put at rest. He will neither feel sad about any misfortune nor rejoice at any fortune. When he passes away, he will receive God's mercy, will enjoy the everlasting bliss, and will associate with the prophets and the Imams, that is a great victory.

Impact of Worship at Soul

God-seekers believe that acts of worship and religious duties are different from one another in terms of leaving a certain impact on soul and its perfection. Some of them have the quality of purification

while others adorn the soul; some of them remove darkness from the soul while others illuminate man's soul. For example, charity purifies man's heart from the evil of love for wealth. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby.* (9:103)"

Observing fast –*Sawm*- strengthens one's will and power of resistance against carnal desires, leading to piety and immunity. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.*" (2:183)

The virtue of prayer is to illuminate man's soul with the light of the heavens and the earth. The Holy Qur'an says: *"Keep up prayer for My remembrance.*" (20:14)

Nevertheless, Hajj has a double purpose—it has the quality of purification and it is ornament as well. They both remove darkness of mammonism from heart and bring about illumination of God's remembrance. Almsgiving, being far from one's family, having no ease and comfort of one's home, one's business and jobs, tolerating the sufferings of a trip, having to put up with short-tempered co-travelers, sunburn, insufficient sleep, performing rather unfamiliar acts are not pleasant by the norms of the superficial intellect. Yet, throwing pebbles at Satan in Mina, waling at fast pace, getting out of one's normal clothes, and shaving one's hair are extremely useful in purifying man's heart from the evil of arrogance, egotism and in taming the haughty and the disobedient souls. This is party of the purifying quality of Hajj.

As for the ornamental virtue of Hajj, it is both moral and spiritual.

Hajj congregation leads to Ummah's supremacy among other nations.

Hajj, A Lively Act

Hajj, which is full of meaning and spirit, can be inspiring and bring about such ritual effects. Ceremonial rites devoid of truth are not expected to bring about prosperity or dignity. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"Most surely, there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart or he gives ear and is a witness."* (50:38)

Beyond doubt, like healing medicine, religious duties are composed of ingredients with divine formula, which will leave great effects on the human societies. Nevertheless, susceptible temperaments are needed to manifest those effects.

Hajj Of Most People Is Devoid Of Spirit

Unfortunately, most people who go on Hajj have neither a heart to understand the meaning of Hajj nor give an ear to those who have a heart so as to perform the Hajj rites which are full of spirit. They would rather perform the Hajj rites hastily, get out of the state of Ihram and restriction, and then engage in taking photos, buying souvenirs, or doing business. They think they have achieved the ultimate goal of Hajj and return home purified like when they were born of their mother!

Hajj Devoid Of Spirit Has No Living Effects

Hajj devoid of spirit cannot possibly purify man's heart from vices and adorn it with virtues nor can it turn human beings divine. Socially too, it cannot give dignity to the ummah nor can it give supremacy or world leadership to the ummah. A clear proof of Muslim's Hajj being abortive in our times is the fact that this great religious duty is performed every year with much glory but,

unfortunately, does not produce the intended result. Its radiant effects, including purification of the soul and the ummah's supremacy, some of the inevitable results of Hajj as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, are not noticeable.

Notes:

[10] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamila as-Sajjadiyya*

[11] See *Duaa Abu-Hamza ath-Themali*

Social Effects of Hajj

Hajj, The Assembly Of Dispersed Powers In Single Forum

"And proclaim among men the pilgrimage; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path, that they may witness advantages for them and mention the Name of Allah during stated days." (The Holy Qur'an; 22:27)

The word 'advantages' includes all virtues, both physically and spiritually, of the world and the Hereafter indicating that the great assembly of Muslim nations in a single forum is like a sea coming into existence as a result of joining of small and big rivers. As a result of unity of opinion and unanimity arising from believing in one God and being the followers of one Book and one Prophet, all Muslims stand in a single rank facing Kiblah [12] and go round a center with a single aim. Such unity of ideology and act gives this assembly so much power that it can remove mountains, defeat the most formidable opposition powers, foil any treacherous plot, and generate a life full of happiness, dignity, and supremacy by performing heavenly injunctions and consolidating the pillars of social justice.

Beyond doubt, what can solve problems of life is social cooperation, which is materialized by creating understanding among nations. The most important factor behind understanding is the rightful teachings of a religion, which bridges the gaps, brings hearts together, creates a link between east and west, and makes the black and white, Arabs and non-Arabs, Turks and Hindus, feel sympathy for one another. In the Farewell Hajj on Mount Arafat, the Holy Prophet of Islam (saw) said: "O people, surely your Lord is One, the father of all of you is one, you all come from Adam and Adam from the earth. (surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful

of his duty) Arab has no advantage over non-Arab except for piety.” [13]

Also in his Farewell Hajj in Mina, the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “Believers are brethren. Their blood has equal value. They are a single hand and power against others. The promise of each of them is like that of all, hence binding. [14]”

Calling To Hajj Is Calling To Unity Of Power

The Holy Qur’an asks Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) to call people to Hajj, to come and see the Islamic unity in the House of Monotheism, and to notice the assembly of dispersed powers in a single forum so as to realize the amazing advantages of Hajj, including self-purification, regulation of a sound politico-economic affairs, and consolidation of the pillars of supremacy across the world as a result of the assembly, unity, and circumambulation of the Sacred House.

Hajj, Man’s Ascension To Heaven

Spiritual journey and affinity with God are some of the advantages of Hajj. The light of God’s guidance illuminates susceptible hearts, making them detached from the earth and attached to God. By putting on Ihram, saying Labbayk, circumambulating the House, offering sacrifice, and doing other acts of worship, man’s heart goes through a spiritual stage. Only does God know how many averted hearts have become fond of Him in this Sacred House and how many misled men have become pious and heavenly thanks to the blessings of this holy place. The Holy Qur’an supports this claim by saying: *“(The Holy House is) blessed and guidance for the nations.*” (3:96)

The Ka'aba's Wonderful Attraction

The Qur'anic Verse *"They will come to you on foot or every lean camel, coming from every remote path,"* is response to the Qur'anic Verse, *"And proclaim among men the pilgrimage,"* indicating that the divine call which was spread throughout the world by Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) and then reaffirmed by the ordainment of the Holy Prophet of Islam (saw) left such impact on the Ka'aba that it attracted susceptible men from the remotest corners of the world with its magnetic property.

During Hajj season, amazing activity occurs in the corners of the world and large crowd of people pour into Mecca by land, sea, and air, while there is no force, allurement, propaganda, or any other urging factors. People go through all hardships so as to come to visit the Ka'aba with love and as soon as their eyes fall on the House of their Beloved, they start prostrating themselves and forgetting all hardships. They will say lovingly: "O Lord of the House, the House is Yours and the servant is Yours."

How Lovingly Pilgrims Circumambulate The Ka'aba

Speaking about Hajj in the last part of sermon I of Nahjul Balagha, Imam Ali (a.s) describes people as such: "... The people go to it as beasts or pigeons go towards spring water."

Like thirsty camels reaching water or pigeons flying towards their chicks in the nest, the pilgrims rush towards the House of the Beloved so enthusiastically that one has the impression that they have lost their control.

People's Inclination Towards The Ka'aba, Unusual

By thinking about what the Holy Qur'an and Imam Ali (a.s) have said, we will realize the fact that inclination towards the Ka'aba (for

those who are sound instinctively) is not ordinary inclination; rather there is a divine attraction in it. There is the same attraction towards the household of the Holy Prophet (saw) being the result of Prophet Ibrahim's supplication and God's answering him: *"... Therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards them... "* (the Holy Qur'an; 14:37)

When, carrying out God's order, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) brought his wife Hagar and the infant Ismaeel (Prophet Ishmael) to al-Hijaz desert and had to leave them alone there, raising his hands towards the sky, supplicated: *"O our Lord! Surely, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near They Sacred House, our Lord! That they may keep up prayer; therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful."* (The Holy Qur'an; 14:37)

Why Should Guardians Of Spirituality Be Settled In A Desert

Why should the offspring of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) be settled in an uncultivated land far from civilization? What is the advisability? Is it because they are the guardians of the spirituality of human society, keeper of prayer, God's remembrance, and secret of servitude in the world? Must their living environment be far from luxury, which makes man forget God, so as to be able to keep remembrance of God and the Hereafter alive in man's heart? It is said: "The world and the Hereafter are like rival wives; when you please one, you will hurt the other." [15]

Imam Ali (a.s) says: "The world and the Hereafter are two incompatible enemies and two roads in different directions. Whoever loves the world will naturally abandon the Hereafter. The world and the Hereafter are like east and west. The more you go towards the

east you will take more distance from the west."

A man of many desires will not be a man of God. A mammonist loses spiritual values and his guidance has no effect on human souls and hearts.

Therefore, the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s) and the spiritual leaders must live in an uncultivated land devoid of luxury and physical pleasures.

They must choose to live near the Sacred House and to think of God and remember Him all the time. Human hearts, too, have naturally an inclination towards their Lord hence move to His House and its guardians. Not only do they avoid sparing everything for this sake but also they sincerely offer their pure emotions and love for the House of God and the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s), the most honorable of whom is the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Imams (a.s).

What Great Asset Has Been Given To Muslims!

Man's attraction to the House of God and forum of monotheism, on the one hand, and the great assembly of the ummah in a single place for performing a series of common religious acts, extremely inspiring in creating understanding and unity of thoughts, on the other, is a great heavenly asset bestowed on Muslims by God. Moral virtues, the power to fight atheism, and a spiritual way of living both in the world and the Hereafter, are some of the advantages of Hajj.

The Ka'aba, A Security For The Survival Of Human Society

"Allah has made the Ka'aba, the Sacred House, a maintenance for the people, and the sacred month and the offspring's and the sacrificial animals with garlands; this is that you may know that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever in the earth and

that Allah is the Knower of all things.” (The Holy Qur’an; 5:97)

In this Qur’anic Verse, the Ka’aba, which has been described as the sacred house and maintenance for the people, and the month during which Muslims assemble in Mecca as the sacred month, and also the sacrificial animals with garlands indicate respect for the house. They all serve as security for human survival from annihilation and corruption.

The house, highly respected, is the Kiblah towards which Muslims all over the world perform their prayer, slaughter cows, sheep, and camels, and bury their dead. All deeds are accepted only when they are performed in the direction of the Ka’aba. Muslims deem such respect for the Ka’aba in the remotest and most hidden places. They are careful not to ease nature with their face or back towards it. The House is so sacred that sacrificial animals and precious assets are offered to it.

Beyond doubt, when the Sacred House is a common goal, it will guarantee the survival of the Ummah. It is a shelter for the oppressed and a source of tranquility for those who are in a state of panic. All these important effects come from the sanctity, which God has made about this house. God knows that the human society is in need for a single forum respected by all—a sanctuary where all people can join hands and hearts to solve problems and walk on the path to a happy life with the power of unity. Hence, he has made the Ka’aba in such a strange place with sanctity. The same question is sufficient to make us understand that the philosophy behind whatever God has made and that He is the Knower of all things.

The Ka'aba, A Sanctuary And A Place Of Security

"(And when) We made the House a pilgrimage for men and a (place of) security." (The Holy Qur'an; 2:125)

The human society, when differences arise and violations arise, is in need for an internationally-recognized forum before which all people feel responsible so that if a wronged individual or nation appeals to it, all nations will rise up in support and take right from the oppressor. Human society is in need for an international forum of security to the grievances of human beings and nations in fear. The same need has encouraged the modern man to form the United Nations Organization. The success or failure of this organization is not to be discussed here. For this reason, in the world of Islam, this need has been taken into consideration and God has made the Ka'aba a place of security in the world in addition to making it sacred so that the Ummah who esteem this house will not allow anyone to be wronged or oppressed. In this way, not only will oppression or intimidation cease to exist among people but also Muslims will be known as reformers and guarantors of security at an international level. It is true then that the Ka'aba is the guarantor of the world peace and security; therefore, man can live a happy life and enjoy blessing if the Ka'aba is considered as maintenance for people and the Hajj rites will be performed with its perfect conditions.

Ignoring Hajj Means Dispersion In Human Society

If, God forbid, one day the Hajj rites are abandoned or become devoid of content, human society will collapse, blessings will depart man's life, and oppression and insecurity will prevail.

The Prophesy Of The Abandonment Of The Ka'aba And Its Sinister Effects In Traditions

One of the sinister events happening at the end of the world causing spread of oppression in the human societies is the closing of Hajj and the abandonment of the Ka'aba. Speaking of the events happening before the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah expedite his reappearance), Imam Sadiq (a.s) has said: "(When) you see that Allah's House is closed down and the Hajj rites are abandoned, beware you; supplicate to Allah to be safe from His punishment, for people are at this time subject to Allah's wrath." [16]

Hajj, God's Right To Man And Man's Gratefulness To Him

"… and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, above any need of the worlds" (The Holy Qur'an; 3:97)

This Qur'anic Verse reveals God's right to men. In the same way that every benefactor has a right, and the person who has been favored tries to make up for his benefactor's beneficence and pay a visit to his house to express his thanks, it is the duty of people to make pilgrimage to God's House to offer their thanks to Him.

The True Benefactor Is God And Offering Thanks Is Obligatory

God Who is the true Benefactor is the One Who has favored human being infinitely. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"… and if you count Allah's favors, you will not be able to number them."* (14:34)

Showing God's favor to man, the Holy Qur'an also says: *"Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, and made complete to you His favors*

outwardly and inwardly?" (13:20)

Does such a Benefactor not have right upon you to go to His House and offer Him gifts as much as you can for expressing thanks to Him?

God Accept Generously Every Little Deed

For all benefactions, God only expects His servants to visit His House and to offer a sacrifice, that too, to the extent of each one's financial capability.

Thankfulness Benefits Man, Not God

Visitation of the Sacred House does not benefit God, for He is above what we think of Him. Rather it is a grace from the Almighty God. By call to Hajj, God has made man distinct from animals.

Thankfulness To God Makes Man Distinct From Animals

One of the advantages of human beings is the virtue of gratitude to the Benefactor though this quality exists to some extent in certain animals but it is not a necessary quality in them. Yet man cannot possibly do without it unless he has lost his human nature as a result of indulging in carnal desires and lusts and has become an animal. In this connection, the Holy Qur'an says: *"They are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones."* (7:179)

Evidently, not only do such bestial ones refuse to thank their benefactor but also they will deny Him.

Call To Worship Is Man's Dignity

What grace it is from God to man to make him duty-bound to pray, to make pilgrimage to Mecca, and to do other religious acts that are somehow expressions of thanks by which man's dignity is

safeguarded. In this relation, Imam Sajjad says: "Praise belongs to Allah, for had He withheld His servants the knowledge to praise Him for the uninterrupted kindnesses with which He has tried them and the manifest favors which he has lavished upon them, they would have moved about in His kindnesses without praising Him, and spread themselves out in His provision without thanking Him. Had such been the case, they would have left the bounds of humanity for that of beastliness and become as He has described in the firm text of His Book: 'They are but as the cattle, nay, but they are further astray from the way." [17]

Why Is An Ungrateful Man More Astray Than Beasts?

Lacking in intellect and being subject to its instincts, an animal does not ignore its natural forces nor does it deviate from its path, rather it acts as its Creator wills. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"… There is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely, my Lord is on the right path."* (11:56)

Therefore, if an animal is not on human path and does not reach human perfection, it has not committed any sin nor has it done anything contrary to what is expected from it, rather it walks on the right path in reaching animal perfection and follows its own instinct which is its right path. However, man who has intellect, an advantage over animals, is duty-bound to recognize his Benefactor and to be thankful to Him. Therefore, when this graceful human quality is missing, man will deviate from his natural path, which is God's right path and he will become more astray than beasts hence subject to a great loss and punishment.

Call To Hajj Is God's Grace To Man

To sum it up, by inventing man to the acts of worship, especially visitation of His Sacred House, God has had grace on him by giving him dignity and preventing him from falling into the state of an animal.

What Profitable Trade The Visitation Of The Ka'aba Is!

The visitation of the Ka'aba by the humble servant and his offering of an unworthy sacrifice is means by which God will shower with His double blessings of the world and the Hereafter.

Some Of The Wonderful Blessings Of Hajj According To Traditions

The intention of Hajj opens the gates of God's mercy. Imam Baqir (a.s) was quoted as saying: "When a man intends to go on Hajj, for every step he takes in preparing for his journey Allah will write ten good deeds for him and will write off ten of his wrongdoings and will elevate his ten scales until he completes his preparatory affairs." [18]

Not All Hajj Pilgrims Are Equal In Terms Of Reward

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: "The Hajj pilgrims who return home are three groups; one are rescued from the fire (of Hell), another are cleansed from their sins as if they have been just born, and the third group return home with their wealth and family secured. This is the least reward the Hajj pilgrims can obtain." [19]

Why Is The Difference In Reward?

Evidently, the difference in reward is because of difference in intention –Niyyah-, the difference in cognition of the Lord of the House, and the difference in understanding the secret of the acts and the influence of the Hajj rites on the soul. One pilgrim goes there with the pure intention to please God, to ascend to heaven, and to loosen the chains of captivity of self so that he will not be

trapped by Satan hence going to Hell. Such a man will be rescued from the fire (of Hell) forever.

Another pilgrim goes on Hajj solely to discharge his religious duty without paying attention to the spirit of the act or removing vices from his self and obtaining virtues. Thanks to Hajj, his sins will be forgiven but since he has not been purified, he has to be careful about his future so that Satanic temptations and his carnal desires will not push him to sins hence fire. The third man goes on Hajj to escape people's blame, to get the title of Hajji, and to gain business profits. The reward of such a man is only material and worldly. His family and wealth are secure until he comes back home.

Hajj Is The Market Of The Hereafter

Imam Baqir (a.s) said: "Hajj and Umrah are two markets of the Hereafter. Those who enter into them are Allah's guests. If Allah preserves his guest's life, he will live free from sins and if He makes him die, he will be admitted into Paradise." [20]

Hajj Pilgrims Are God's Guests

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: "The performers of Hajj and umrah are Allah's guests. If they ask, they will be given, if they pray, they will be answered, if they intercede, their intercession will be accepted, if they keep silent, they will be blessed, and they will be given a million dirhams for each one they have spent." [21]

Looking At The Ka'aba Is Blessing, Too!

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: "Whoever looks at the Ka'aba, rewards are written for him and his wrongdoings are written off until he takes his look away from it." [22]

The Imam (a.s) also said: “Whoever looks at the Ka’aba, a reward is written for him and ten of his wrongdoings are written off.”

The Precinct Of The Ka’aba Is Showered With Mercy And Blessings

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Allah sends down one hundred and twenty blessings in the precinct of the Ka’aba; sixty for those who circumambulate forty for those who worship, and twenty for those who look at it.” [23]

What Blessed Act The Circumambulation Of God’s House Is!

A man came to Imam Kazim (a.s):

‘Are going on Hajj?’ the Imam asked.

‘Yes,’ said the man.

‘Do you know the rewards of Hajj?’ asked the Imam.

‘No,’ answered the man.

Then the Imam said:

‘Whoever comes to Mecca, circumambulates the Ka’aba, and performs two Rak’at [24] of prayer, Allah will write seventy thousand rewards for him and write off seventy thousand of his wrongdoings, elevate him seventh thousand scales, accept his intercession for seventy thousand families, fulfill seventy thousand of his needs, and write for him the reward of setting free seventy thousand slaves worth ten thousand dirhams each.

Forsaker Of Hajj Is Not Human

As we have previously mentioned, the visitation of God's House is a sign of man's thankfulness to his Benefactor, a prerequisite for courtesy, man's human quality, a cause of distinction from animals, and a means to win God's favor and obtain all blessings in the world and the Hereafter. How inhuman it would be then for a man not to consider himself duty-bound to visit his Benefactor and to offer his thanks to Him! What is more inhuman is that God invites man to His House but man ignores such an invitation! Such heedlessness arises from the inner unbelief of one who *"disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient above any need of the worlds."* (The Holy Qur'an; 3:97)

It is worth mentioning that according to the Holy Qur'an and traditions, unbelief has different stages one of which is disbelief in the secondary precepts. This kind of disbelief does not lead to abiding in Hell forever unless it arises from disbelief in the fundamentals of the religion. Such disbelief is equal to atheism and subject to abiding in Hell forever.

It is related that Imam Kazim (a.s), as was asked about the forsaker of Hajj, said: "The forsaker of Hajj is not unbeliever, but if a man denies that Hajj is obligatory, he is then unbeliever." [25]

The late Faiz says: "The forsaker of Hajj is not unbeliever, for unbelief is related to ideology and not practice."

He also says: "One who forsakes Hajj without having an excuse will die as a Jew or Christian because he would have performed Hajj had he believed in its obligation taking in consideration that he is

able to do it and that he should have expected he might die at any moment before being able to perform it.” [26]

Forsakers Of Hajj, On The Day Of Judgment, Are With Jews Or Christians

Addressing Imam Ali (a.s), the Holy Prophet (saw) says: “O Ali, one who forsakes Hajj while having the means (to perform it) is unbeliever, for Allah Himself has said: ‘And pilgrimage to the House (Hajj) is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, upon everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient above any need of the worlds.’

O Ali, anyone who delays Hajj until he dies, Allah will raise him as Jew or Christian on the Day of Judgment.” [27]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “He who dies before he performs the obligatory Hajj while he was not too needy, too ill, or too persecuted to perform it will die as non-Muslim (i.e. Jewish or Christian).” [28]

Ghazali says: “How excellent is the worship (of Hajj) by the lack of which the religion lacks perfection and the neglector of which becomes as same as Jews or Christians in terms of deviation—this is surely the evident ignorance and the scandalous infamy.” [29]

Forsaker Of Hajj Will Be Blind On The Day Of Judgment

…I asked Imam Reza (a.s) about the Qur’anic Verse, *'And whoever is blind in this (world), he shall also be blind in the Hereafter; and more erring from the way.'* (17:71). The Imam (a.s) said:

This Qur’anic Verse is about one who delays Hajj despite having the means (to perform it) and keeps on saying, I will go on Hajj this year, but does not do until he dies.’ [30]

Hajj Consolidates Faith

Imam Ali (a.s) says: “Allah has made obligatory upon you… the pilgrimage (Hajj), for it consolidates faith.” [31]

Evidently, any institution that is weakened by the nature of this world is in need for factors to make up for the weakness and to consolidate. Religion, too, which is the source of happiness for man in this world and the Hereafter, might be weakened as a result of the negative propaganda of the foreigners from outside and excess of lusts from within as well as temptations for committing sins in a way that Muslims’ faith will be undermined. The call to Hajj will certainly blow a new spirit into the body of the Ummah. Once again, Mecca, the mother of cities, opens her arms embracing the believers coming from the remotest parts of the world and enlivens the good memory of obedience to God and servitude by displaying a scene full of life and activity within a few limited days. It reminds everyone of the worthless worldly life, the horrible stages of purgatory, and Hell as well as all the prophets and the Imams’ sufferings for the consolidation or the religion. Mecca removes the veils of ignorance before people’s eyes, revealing the light of faith, devotion to God, and the Last Judgment and satiates the believers spiritually. From this cause, it is admitted that the survival of the religion in the Ummah depends on the survival of the Ka’aba and revival of the Hajj rites. In this relation, Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “As long as the Ka’aba is upright, the religion will not perish.” [32]

He (a.s) also says: “Three things are sacred for Allah; His Book that is full of light and wisdom, His House that is the Kiblah towards which people offer their prayers –and Allah does not accept from him who directs towards any other direction save the House-and the Household the Holy Prophet (saw).” [33]

The Ka'aba, Emblem Of Islam

Imam Ali (a.s) says: "Allah the Glorified has made it (the Sacred House) an emblem for Islam." [34]

In the same way that there are certain marks on the road to guide people, God has made the Ka'aba an emblem for Islam so that those who err in recognizing the truth of this religion and its deductive programs reflect on the Hajj rites and its spiritual effects on Muslims and find the true nature of Islam—the religion of pure sincerity, away from polytheism and what is ungodly. Islam is the religion of intellectual development of shedding the childish splendor of the world and of affinity with the Creator of the universe. Moreover, it is the propagator of equality between the poor and the rich, man and woman before the law of truth and justice. It is based on unity of faith, which is the strongest factor among human beings; so, Islam is a dynamic faith and constant movement towards supremacy in cultural, economic, and military fields. And, finally, Islam is the religion of jihad (holy war), of fighting against all satanic powers, of self-sacrifice, of being upright to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and of reaching perfection. This is the essence of Islam. Hajj pilgrimage represents such an essence and spirit.

Hajj Removes Poverty And Social Disobedience

Imam Ali (a.s) says: "Hajj and Umrah remove poverty and cleanse sins." [35]

The words 'poverty' and 'sins' in the above-mentioned sermon indicate that Hajj brings about absolute independence and purification for Ummah in a way that they feel no need for alien nations' help and feel independent in cultural, economic, military,

and administrative affairs. We hope that theft, indecency, bribery, hoarding, and injustice will leave the society to change it into a purified, rich one.

Ignoring Hajj Leads To Weakness Of The Religion And The Unbelievers' Domination Over Muslims

In view of the vital effects of Hajj on the ummah's supremacy, if the Islamic governments ignore this important religious duty, or if Hajj becomes devoid of its content, its spiritual power will diminish in the ummah in view of the propaganda spread by the enemies of Islam. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "If people ignore Hajj, it is incumbent upon the statesmen to encourage people to go on it whether they are willing or unwilling, for the House has been made for pilgrimage." [36]

"If people neglect Hajj, it becomes obligatory upon the leaders to force them to perform it… and if they need money to go on Hajj, the leaders will be required to supply them with such money from the public treasury." [37]

"If people quit Hajj, they will be given no respite from punishment." [38]

Addressing to Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein, Imam Ali (a.s) says: "(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in mind in the matter of your Lord's House; the Ka'aba. Do not forsake it so long as you live, because if it is abandoned, you will not be respited." [39]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "Thanks to our Shiite pilgrims, Allah removes disaster from the Shiites who do not perform it, but if all agree to forsake Hajj, they will perish." [40]

Since Hajj plays an important NO Charity Can Replace Hajj role in

safeguarding the religion and being a main pillar of Islam and a factor for reviving the ummah, it must not be abandoned or weakened under any conditions. According to traditions, no charity can replace it.

… I said to Imam Sadiq (a.s) that some jurisprudents remark that if a man performs the Hajj rites once, he would better give charity instead of going on Hajj again. The Imam (a.s) commented:

“They are lying, for if they do so, the Ka’aba will be forsaken whereas Allah has made this House maintenance for people.” [41]

Spending A Mountain Of Red Gold In The Sake Of God Does Not Equal Going On Hajj

The Holy Prophet has just completed the Hajj rites when a Bedouin came to him saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I left home for Hajj but because of an obstacle I failed to perform its rites. I am a wealth man. Kindly give me an instruction by which I get the reward of Hajj.’ The Holy Prophet (saw) turned his look at Mount Abu-Qubais and said: ‘If you have red gold as much as this mountain and spend it for Allah’s sake, the reward of such deed will not be as much as that of the Hajj pilgrimage.” [42]

One Dirham Is Better Than Thousands

Abu Bassir quoted Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: “One dirham spent on Hajj is better than two million dirhams to be given for Allah’s sake.” [43]

Neither Forsake Hajj Nor Dissuade Others

Imam Baqir (a.s) says: “One who prefers a worldly affair to going on Hajj will realize that all the Hajj pilgrims have returned home with their heads shaven but his needs have not been fulfilled yet. [44]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Beware of delaying the Hajj of your brother, for not only will you be punished in the Hereafter but also you will be afflicted with tribulation in this world.” [45]

Is’haq ibn Ammar reported: I said to Imam Sadiq (a.s) that a man consulted me on going on Hajj but since he was needy, I dissuaded him. The Imam (a.s) said: “You will become ill for one year for what you have said.”

Ammar said: “For one year, I became ill.” [46]

The Blessings Of Hajj On All People Of The World

While elaborating on the philosophy of Hajj, Imam Reza (a.s) said: "The benefits of Hajj cover both east and west; those who perform the Hajj rites and those who do not whether they are businessmen, shopkeepers, or poor. People from all classes of societies are blessed with the benefits of Hajj." [47]

During the season of Hajj, the leaders of the Islamic countries converge a forum based on the unity of ideology, compassion, love, purity, and sincerity. So their resolution for implementing laws, dispensing social justice, and safeguarding the human rights, with no aim other than obeying God's instructions and pleasing Him will benefit all. By gaining power and supremacy as a result of unity, the Islamic countries can establish good commercial and cultural ties with other nations and gradually make them familiar with the heavenly teachings of Islam. Because of the universal benefits of Hajj, the Holy Qur'an and the traditions so emphatically call people to Hajj.

Where Are The Positive Effects Of Hajj On The Ummah?

All the afore-mentioned benefits are some of the life-giving effects of Hajj on the society. Yet this great assembly is held every year but Muslim nations face one another with suspicion, fear one another, and depart without having created any kind of understanding, getting to know one another, and without becoming aware of the treacherous conspiracies hatched for them from outside. It is really surprising that the power of the religion can hold such great assembly in a single time and place of the ummah but the foreigners' negative propaganda and destructive colonialist plots cause such dispersion among the ummah that they are dispersed while being together. Such an outlook saddened the Holy Prophet

(saw) fourteen centuries ago so much that he expressed his worries about the future of the ummah in the Sacred House and warned Muslims against it among other bitter events.

The Holy Prophet Worries About Hajj At The End Of The World

Abdullah ibn Abbas is quoted as saying:

I was with the Holy Prophet (saw) in the Farewell Hajj. He took the gate of the Ka'aba with the hand and while addressing to people, he spoke of the future events. On Hajj, the Holy Prophet said: "The rich will go to Mecca for amusement, the middle-class for business, and the poor for showing off and fame. At that time, people will learn the Holy Qur'an for purposes other than Allah, recite it as song, and engage in learning (Islamic) jurisprudence for worldly benefits." [48]

We Have To Confess This Bitter Fact

We have to confess this bitter fact and admit that the reason of this weakness and decadence among Muslims despite having such sublime program is our failure to understand the spirit and essence of the heavenly teachings of Islam.

The Fault Lies With Us

As a matter of fact, we have not understood the essence of Islam, accepted it whole-heartedly, or introduced the attractive image of it to the world. Yes, we have to admit this fact humbly. Perhaps God will forgive us for our confession. We are called Muslims while our individual or social ways of living do not conform to the true essence of Islam. Beyond doubt, the responsibility of us, Muslims, before God, Islam, and the Holy Qur'an is extremely great. Presenting a distorted image of Islam and introducing Hajj as useless are sins subjected to punishment.

Notes:

[12] Kiblah is the direction of the place to which Muslims must turn for prayer— the Ka'aba at Mecca.

[13] See Tuhaf ul-Uqoul.

[14] See Safinat ul-Bihar, Vol. 1

[15] See Collection of Waram; vol. 1 p.138

[16] See Rawzat ul-Kafi; vol. 8 p.37

[17] See as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya, Supplication I

[18] See al-Kafi; Vol. 4

[19] See al-Wafi; vol. 2

[20] See al-Wafi, Vol. 2

[21] See al-Wafi; Vol. 2

[22] See al-Kafi; Vol. 4

[23] See al-Kafi; Vol. 4

[24] Rak'at is unit of a prayer.

[25] See al-Wafi; vol. 2 Chapter: Hajj section 17

[26] See al-Wafi; vol. 2 Chapter: Hajj section 48

[27] See Men la Yahzuruh ul-Faqih; chapter: Miscellaneous matters

[28] See al-Kafi; vol. 4 p.268 Hadith 1.

[29] See al-Mahajjat ul-Baydhaa; vol. 2 p.145

[30] See Men la Yahzuruh ul-Faqih; chapter: Negligence of Hajj

[31] See Nahj ul-Balagha; saying 244

[32] See al-Kafi; Vol. 4

[33] See Ibn Fettal an-Nishapuri's Eawdhat ul-Waizheen; 320

[34] See Nahjul Balagha; sermon I

[35] See Nahjul Balagha; sermon 109

[36] See Ilal ush-Shara'ie; vol. 2

[37] See al-Kafi; vol. 4 p.272 Hadith 1

[38] See al-Kafi; vol. 4 p.271

[39] See Nahjul Balagha; Will (Wasiyya) No. 47

[40] See Mustadrak ul-Wasail; Vol. 2 Section: Hajj p.4

[41] See Ilal ush-Shara'ie; vol. 2 p.137 Hadith 1

[42] See al-Kafi; vol. 4 p. 258 Hadith 25

[43] See al-Wafi; vol. 2 Chapter: Hajj p. 47 Section 16

[44] See Men la Yahdhuruh ul-Faqih; Chapter: Hajj

[45] See Men la Yahdhuruh ul-Faqih; Chapter: Hajj p. 158

[46] See Men la Yahdhuruh ul-Faqih; Chapter: Hajj p. 158

[47] See Ilal ush-Shara'ie; vol. 2 p.90 Hadith 5

[48] See Tafsir al-Mizan; vol. 5 p.434 (as quoted from Tafsir al-Qummi)

Spiritual Philosophy of Hajj

God's favor to Man

Indisputably, God has created man of earth in order to nurture him during his worldly life with the heavenly teachings of the prophets, remove pollutions from him, make him pure, and promote him to the highest stage of affinity with Himself. Since an earthy man is not worthy of affinity with God, and if such a man is left to himself, he will be drowned in the quagmire of lusts, God Who has made man evolutionize from the stage of mineral to plant and from plant to animal and then to human, can promote man to a stage making him unison with the angels. God does not withhold His favor from man and protects him with His special kindness and mercy. To prepare man to ascend to a metaphysical world, God has made a house of stone and mud in this world calling it His House and inviting his helpless and shelter less servants to shower them with His special blessings.

God has called all servants on the earth to make pilgrimage to Mecca, circumambulate His House, and link their hearts to the Lord of the House so as to gradually prepare themselves for visiting the Lord of the universe. God says (in a Hadith Qudsi [49]): "I am not contained in the earth nor in the heavens, but I am contained in the soft and tranquil heart of My believing servant." [50]

Whoever goes to Mecca on foot will circumambulate the Ka'aba, but whoever goes there with his heart present, the Ka'aba will circumambulate him.

The King makes a palace in a ruined village

What a great favor God has done to human beings to choose a House for Himself on the earth! What need does God have for a

house in a ruined village? To fondle the villagers and to shower them with favor, God has chosen a house of the village as His to invite the helpless people to it once a week, a month, or a year calling them His guests and bestowing gifts on them so that they will improve their living conditions, learn manners, obtain knowledge and gnosticism, come to the city from the village and come to the capital city to be worthy of being received by the king and become his favorites.

God is too Great to be contained in a ruined village and take a house there. But the favor He has done to the villagers had made them feel dignified in a way to say that we are so much respected by the King that He has made a house among us and we have a link with Him. He is near us and we seek the settlement of our need from Him. What a favor it is that God Who is free from any defect and need has been so kind as to make a house of stone and mud for Himself making Him a neighbor of the servants to imply that 'I am with you; ask Me for everything.' He has also appointed all mosques as His Houses making Himself available to His servants. God has not said: You have necessarily to come to the heavens to seek help from Me or you have to come to Mecca to visit Me. I accept any corner you choose in My Name as My House and will receive you. I consider any hour in day or night you stand for prayer at home in the direction of My House as pilgrimage to My House and will answer your call and attend to your needs. Therefore, glorify Allah, the Merciful King, there is no god but He; the Lord of the universe.

Hajj, a display of man's Spiritual Journey

The external acts of Hajj symbolize the spiritual stages of the prophets and the Imams. Hajj is a display of the spiritual journey of the devotees and the stages of servitude. The essence of worship is

the journey towards God and the external acts of Hajj, devoid of presence of the heart, are not considered as worship. The Holy Prophet (saw) says: “The daily prayer, Hajj, circumambulation, and the other rites are aimed at remembering Allah. But when there is no remembrance of Him in your heart, what value will your oral remembrance have?” [51]

The Holy Qur’an has blamed the heedless worshippers - *“So, woe to the praying ones who are unmindful of their prayers.* (107:4, 5) *”-, and forbidden offering prayers while being drunk –"O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know what you say."* (4:43)-.

Genuflection and prostration are worthy if they indicate humbleness of soul and broken heart. The spiritual path too is real only when it is manifested in the form of bodily acts. As long as man continues to live in this world, his soul and body are not separate. Man’s body is a manifestation of his soul and the acts of the body are manifestations of his inner feelings. In the same way that physical acts represent spiritual acts, the physical acts push the soul towards spiritual journey.

“To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deeds life them up.” (The Holy Qur’an 35:10)

Physical prostration that symbolizes humbleness and a broken heart is true only when it illuminates man’s inner being, making the soul ascend to the heavens to sit with the angels, otherwise prostration based on hypocrisy, pretense, and habit will have no spiritual effect on the soul.

“Whoever does good whether male or female and he is believer, We will most certainly make him a happy life.” (The Holy Qur’an; 16:97)

Reflect on the following Hadith in which God spoke to the Holy Prophet (saw) on his Midnight Ascension –*israa and Mi’raj*:

Whoever tries to win My pleasure, I will commit him to three characteristics; I will acquaint him with an approach of gratitude that is free from ignorance, a form of (continuous) remembrance of Me that is free from oblivion, and a kind of love with which he will never prefer the love for any creature to Mine. When he loves Me, I will love him and will then open the eyes of his heart to My Glory making him so intimate to Me and will confide him with supplication to Me in the heart of nights and daylight to the degree that he will stop speaking and associating with people. I, too, will make him hear My own words and those of the angels and reveal to him the invisible facts that I hide from My creatures. I will garb him with the uniform of pudency that all My creatures will act modestly towards him. He will walk on the earth guiltlessly, I will cause his heart to be cognizant and discerning, and he will be acquainted with all the affairs of Paradise and Hell. I will reveal to him the hardships of the Day of Judgment, including the way how I will settle account with the rich, poor, ignorant, and scholars. I will light up his grave, ask Munkar and Nakeer –the two angels in charge of the interrogation in graves- to interrogate him, he will neither experience the agony of death nor the darkness of the grave until the Balance –of his deeds- will be deposited for him and the registry –of his deeds- will be opened and the book of his deeds will be finally put into his right hand and he will read it peacefully and there will be no interpreter between Me and him. These are the characteristics of the lovers of Allah.” [52]

From Qur'anic Verses and Hadiths it is inferred that it is in the inner part of man that spiritual journey takes place and it is in the light of the physical acts that man's soul becomes so illuminated that it will see no other being as real but God. In this connection, the Holy Qur'an says: *"We will soon show them Our sings in the universe and in their own souls until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth."* (41:53)

It is in the state that a godly man is so plunged in the sea of knowledge and God's love that he will hear, see, and recognize everything with the light of God and he will become manifestation of God's Attributes and recipient of God's Mercy. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?"* (6:122)

Worship is the journey of the soul and a continued spiritual life in divine light. Since there is unity and interaction between man's body and soul, the journey of the spirit will be naturally manifested in body, and physical acts in prayer too will influence the soul's spiritual life. Since spiritual journey is found in the prophets and the Imams in its highest degree, their spiritual lives are said to be presented to man in the form of prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and other religious duties. The Holy Qur'an says: *"Certainly, you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar." (33:21)*

In this Qur'anic Verse, the Messenger of God has been introduced as excellent exemplar, and people are duty-bound to adapt their deed and ethical lives to those of the Holy Prophet (saw). Addressing the Holy Prophet (saw), the Holy Qur'an says: *"Say: if*

you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your faults." (3:31)

In this Qur'anic Verse, adherence to the Holy Prophet (saw) through journey towards God, affinity, and being loved by Him has been mentioned.

The Imams; The Truth of the religion and religious duties

Many Hadiths testify that the purpose of prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and the other acts of worship mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is the Imams (a.s) as interpreted by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an:

Dawud ibn Kathir quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: O Dawud, we are (the purpose of) the prayer in the Book of Allah, we are the (meaning of) almsgiving, fasting, Hajj, Sacred Month, the Sacred City, the Ka'aba, Kiblah, and the Face of Allah Who says: "Whither you turn, thither is Allah's Face. (The Holy Qur'an*; 2:115)"* We are the clear signs of Allah. [53]

Al-Mufazzal ibn Umar quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: "Let me inform you that the religion and the root of the religion is a man; a man of faith and certainty. He is the same Imam of the ummah and the Imam of his time. Whoever knows him has known Allah and the religion of Allah, whoever denies him has denied Allah and His religion, and whoever keeps ignorant of him has kept ignorant of Allah and His religion. Except through that Imam, no one can understand Allah, His religion, and the religious laws. This is the meaning of 'the religion of Allah is the cognition of men.' …I inform you that I have told the truth if I say that the prayer, almsgiving, fasting, Hajj, the Sacred Mosque, the House of Allah, ablution, ritual

washing, and all the religious duties are the same prophet who has brought all these precepts from Allah. Getting to know these religious duties is the only way for getting to know the Prophet. If you cannot get to know, believe in, and submit to the Prophet, you cannot get to know the truths. Therefore, the purpose of all these truths is the prophet.” [54]

The Imam is The Criterion of The Belief, Ethics, and Deeds

The criterion of the truth of man’s belief, ethics, and deeds in the world and the Hereafter is the Imam. Sheikh as-Saduq quotes Husham ibn Salim as saying: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the meaning of the Qur’anic Verse, ‘And We will set up a balance on the Day of Resurrection; so, no soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least. (21:47).’ He (a.s) answered: “They are the prophets and their successors. -According to another narration related to the Imams (a.s):- “We are the balance of justice.” [55]

The Imam, The Straight Path of God

As he was asked about the meaning of ‘the straight path’ in the Qur’anic Verses, Imam Sadiq (a.s) answered: “By Allah, it is Ali. He is the Straight Path and the Balance.” [56]

Sheikh Saduq says: As Imam Sadiq (a.s) was asked about the ‘Straight Path’, he answered: “It is the path to the knowledge of Allah, Glorified and Majestic is He. They are two paths; one is in the world and the other in the Hereafter. The path in this world is the Imam the obedience to whom is obligatory. Whoever knows him and follows his guidance will pass the Bridge of the Requital in the Hereafter. But whoever does not know him in this worldly life will stumble and fall into Hell.” [57]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) also says: “The Straight Path is Amir ul-Mu’mineen

(The Commander of the Faithful; namely Imam Ali)." [58]

Imam Ali (a.s) says: "I am the prayer and the fasting of the believing men." [59]

Some people however have misinterpreted the above-mentioned Hadith, claiming that when one recognizes his Imam, he is not obliged to perform the religious duties, for the recognition of the Imam is considered as prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and jihad. They invoke the Hadith, 'When you reach the stage of cognition, do as you wish.'

Rejecting this idea, Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "He who believes in such matter is, in my sight, evidently polytheist. Allah has not ordained any prophet to invite people to cognition without obeying the commandments and prohibitions being accompanied by cognition. Allah has asked His servants to act to all religious duties but after getting to know the one who has brought those commandments and calls people to Allah. Therefore, cognition is of primary and obedience is of secondary importance. Whoever reaches cognition will become obedient and whoever becomes obedient will consider disobedience as sin."

Mohammad ibn Marid reported: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) whether he has actually said the hadith, 'When you reach the stage of cognition, do as you wish,' that is related by some people. The Imam said: "I have said it."

I asked: "Even such doings are adultery, theft, or drinking of wine?"

He (a.s) answered: "Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him we will

return. [60] By Allah, it is not fair that we are obliged to perform religious duties and they are free! I have said that when you reach the stage of cognition (of Allah), do good deed a little or as much as you can, for it will be accepted by Allah." [61]

Summary

To sum it up, the external feature of the Hajj rites represents spiritual journey of a perfect man who has gone through different stages of servitude, detached from worldly ties and ornaments, and rescued from darkness and entered into the illuminated kingdom of God. Therefore, a true Hajj is an evolution in soul. It is not a plaything or entertainment as some ignorant people think, for their performance is more like a game than worship.

Malik ibn Anas says: One year, I accompanied Imam Sadiq (a.s) in the Hajj pilgrimage. Being on the back of his horse and in the state of Ihram, the Imam (a.s) was trying to utter 'Labbayk' but his voice stuck in his throat. He therefore rode off his horse. I said: "O son of the Messenger of Allah! Say 'Labbayk', you have to say it." He (a.s) replied: "O son of Abi-Amir, how dare I say it? I fear that Allah will not answer me nor let me in." [62]

Hajj, Spiritual Journey not Physical Acts

The Imams' sayings act as warning to the ignorant ones that Hajj is the journey of soul, not distance. If a man's soul gets into the state of Ihram, reaches the House of God, touches the Black Stone [63] with the hand of the heart, stays on Mount Arafat with full heart, stops in al-Mash'ar al-Haram with full soul, sacrifices the sheep of the carnal desires with the knife of certitude and submission (to the Lord), he has performed a true Hajj.

The Hajj of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S), A Spiritual One

Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) reached such a stage of contentment and submission (to the Lord) inspired by God that he was ready to sacrifice his son for his Lord. He rolled up his sleeves without hesitation, laid down his endeared son, put the sharp knife on his throat, and thought of nothing but carrying out God's order. Such a degree of cognition of God is the result of his true spiritual journey.

He truly visited God's House and out of sincerity took off the garment of pleasure and worldly inclinations from his soul and put on a garment of submission to God and said 'Labbayk' from the bottom of his heart, entered into the sanctuary, stayed in the lap of the mountain of cognition, immersed his senses in divine thoughts, and saw world ornaments as worthless pebbles. He took his son to the altar and put the knife on his throat in Mina saying to himself, 'I turn my face to the direction of the One Who originated the heavens and the earth.' [64]

Reaching such a state requires traversing different stages including giving up pleasures, forgetting one's desires, and throwing pebbles at the alluring Satan to a degree that God's pleasure is considered above the life of even the endeared son.

Content, Not Form, Is Important

It is strange to see that people in everyday life look for truth and reality but when the religion and the Hereafter is concerned, they become content with form and external feature rather than true meanings. We never expect a sugarless piece of cake to taste sweet, but consider a prayer without the presence of heart as perfect, complaining to God that we have offered our prayer but we have not seen a positive effect!

A nourishing food or a trip of leisure leave certain effects, how is it then that a month-long fasting and being guest of God do not leave any effect on souls? How is it acceptable that we do not benefit by the supplications while we have the household of the Prophet -the Ahl ul-Bayt- (a.s) as the best spiritual food and the means for purification? How is it that a weak-long trip to the seaside changes our complexion, but seven-fold circumambulations of the Ka'aba, visiting the graveside of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Imams (a.s) do not change our souls?

As a matter of fact, if we take the title of Hajji off most of those who have been to Mecca, what emblem of Mecca, circumambulation, or touching the Black Stone do we see in them?

Where Are The True Feature Of Islam And The Effect Of Prostration?

Do Muslims not have, according to the Holy Qur'an, a special feature making them distinct from others, and that is the marks of prostration, humbleness, and submission to God? *"…Their marks are in their faces because of the prostration."* (The Holy Qur'an; 48:29)

The effect of prostration alone in the face of a Muslim is not a sign of servitude; rather it should be seen in his business, culture, and all aspects of life. Regrettably, what is not seen in the life of the ummah is the true feature of Islam and the marks of prostration. In certain cases, the feature of unbelievers is seen in Muslims' lives.

Read The Following Reports And Get To Know The Feature Of A Shiite Muslim

It was narrated that, once, during a moonlit night, Imam Ali (a.s), coming out of the mosque, headed for wilderness. The crowd following him reached there. He asked about their identity, and they answered, 'O Amir ul-Mu'mineen, we are your Shiites (followers). The Imam cast a deep look at them, saying, 'How is it that I do not see any mark of Shiism on your faces?'

'What are the marks of a Shiite Muslim?' they asked, and the Imam (a.s) answered: 'Those who are pale of keeping vigilance, weeping out of fear of Allah, bent out of too much standing for prayer, hungry due to fasting, dry-mouthed because of supplications, with marks of prostration in their faces.' [65]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) narrated: As he was sitting in his house, a group of people knocked the door at Imam Sajjad (a.s). He asked his slave girl to see who it was. They shouted, 'It is a group of your Shiites.' The Imam (a.s) jumped so hurriedly that he was about to fall down. When he opened the door, he took back and said, 'They must be lying. Where is the mark of Shiism on their faces? Where are the marks of prostration on them? Our Shiites are known of fear of the Day of Judgment, their foreheads having the marks of prostration, being thin due to fasting, and dry-mouthed because of supplications. The prayer makes their faces wrinkled, keeping vigilance, and fasting on hot days make their bodies exhausted. When (other) people are at rest, they (the true Shiites) glorify Allah, when people are asleep, they are in prayers, and when people are merry making, they are sad.' [66]

Note

The same God-fearing, enlightened people, in their love for the Hereafter, have fought the enemies of God throughout the history of Islam. They considered martyrdom in the way of God as the highest degree of happiness and the best means for affinity with God. We therefore realize that a true Shiite is pious and heedless of the worldly ornaments but does not live the life of a recluse. He stands against the oppressing powers with his strong faith and steadfastness. Describing such people, the Holy Qur’an says: “*Those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall*.” (61:4) Therefore, no one can say that the school based on piety, detachment from this world, prostration, and prayer fails to nurture heroes.

Nevertheless, we stand in prayer with our heart full of love for this world without God’s remembrance. We fast with a soul polluted with sins. We go on Hajj pilgrimage with illegally gotten money, abandon what is obligatory but do what is praiseworthy and expect the positive effects on our lives and wish to be among the angels at the same time!

Addressing to Jesus (a.s), God says: “O Jesus, tell the Israeli wrongdoers not to call upon Me while they have illegal riches under their arms and keep idols at home, for I have sworn I will answer one who calls upon Me. My answer to the call for these wrongdoers is to curse them until they part from one another.” [67]

“O Jesus, tell them: Take your nails off illegal business, cover your ears from obscenity, and come to Me with full heart, for I certainly do not want your external faces.” [68]

A religious report says: “Whoever goes on Hajj with illegal money when saying Labbayk, Allah will say: I will not accept your ‘Labbayk’ until you return the money to its owner.” [69]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “How much wailing and how few devoted hajjis are!” [70]

(In other words, the noise of the performers of Hajj is extremely loud but, unfortunately, real performers of Hajj are very few.)

What Is The Cause Of Skepticism

Skepticism about religious laws made by certain individuals has different motivations. Part of it is by prejudiced and malevolent individuals aimed at diluting Muslims’ ideology so as to carry out their destructive plots in the Islamic society and to attain their satanic goal. Another part arises from ignorance of the truth and philosophy of the heavenly teachings. These skeptics see the external face but they are unaware of the philosophy behind them. These people are ignorant, arrogant, egotist, and unwilling to understand the philosophy of the religion.

The Skepticism Of A Materialist Thirteen Centuries Ago

Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa was unbeliever. He was an abusive orator whom scholars avoided for his sharp tongue. It was Hajj season when he was sitting with a group of unbelievers in the Sacred Mosque looking at pilgrims mockingly. In another corner of the Mosque, Imam Sadiq (a.s) was sitting surrounded by the Shiites who benefited by his heavenly knowledge. The unbelievers turned to Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa saying: “How good it is to debate with the man sitting there surrounded by his devotees making him ashamed!”

Ibn-Abi'l-Aujaa who was too proud of himself said: "I will go right now and make him helpless." Entering into the Imam's assembly, Ibn-Abi'l-Aujaa said: "O Abu-Abdullah, assemblies are safe. (He was afraid of being killed by the believers.) Everyone having phlegm in his chest has to cough it out. (i.e. one who has a question has to ask it.) Can I ask you a question?"

The Imam (a.s) gave him permission. Ibn-Abi'l-Aujaa bared his heart shamelessly of his atheistic ideas in an enchanting rhymed prose, mocked the Hajj rites, and insulted the pilgrims, adding: "Till when will you work in this threshing-floor, seek refuge to this stone, worship this house made of mud and stone, and go round it like frightened camels? Anyone reflecting on the matter will find out that it is unwise act. Give me the answer, you who are at the top, a prominent personality, and a person whose fathers set up and maintained this religion."

Even nowadays such a question are asked by some of the so-called intellectuals!

However, Imam Sadiq (a.s) who was the propagator of the monotheistic school of Islam and had trained students in his mystical sessions, uttered sentences that exposed the evil intention of Ibn-Abi'l-Aujaa and his co-thinkers and bewared them of the sinister fate awaiting them. He (a.s) said: "Whomever Allah causes to go astray and to be blind in heart will find the truth bitter and will have Satan as guardian and lord, and will be damned to perdition from which there is no return." [71]

The Imam (a.s) then made statements the summary of which is as follows: This Ka'aba is the House that God has appointed as a

means to test His servants making them duty-bound to respect and visit and to be a balance from man's devotion and obedience to God. Through the Ka'aba, the devoted believers are made distinct from hypocrites. This House is the resting-place for the prophets, Kiblah of worshippers, and a means to please God. Therefore, the aim of Hajj is to worship God—the Creator of the heavens and the earth and the human soul and body—, not the stone. Kissing or caressing the Black Stone, too, is aimed at carrying out God's order.

Why Was God's House Not Built In A Pleasant Area?

Imam Ali's sermon known as '*al-Khitba al-Qassiya* –Sermon of Disparagement-' answers the above and similar questions. A part of the sermon, which is related to the Holy Ka'aba, will be quoted hereinafter: "Do you not see the Allah, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam up to the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm nor see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house, which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the narrowest valleys between rough mountains, soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water, and scattered habitants, where neither camels not horses nor cows and sheep can prosper. Then, he commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it. In this way, it became the center of their journey in seeking pastures and the rendezvous for meeting of their carrier-beasts, so that human spirits hasten towards it from distant waterless deserts, deep and low-lying valleys and scattered islands in the seas. They shake their shoulders in humbleness, recite the slogan of having reached His audience, march with swift feet, and have disheveled hair and dusted faces. They throw their pieces of cloth on their backs; they have marred the beauty of their faces by

leaving the hair uncut as a matter of great test, severe tribulation, open trials, and extreme refining. Allah has made it a means to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If Allah, the Glorified, had places His Sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level points, plenty of trees, and abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards, and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have been decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distress, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits, and to make all this an open door for His favors and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins). [72]

Why Do Hajj Acts Not Please The Intellect And Temperament?

It is noteworthy that the religious duties have various categories. Some, while being performed for God, have physical pleasure with them too, and man is naturally inclined toward them, such as marriage, eating, and sleeping. They can be both godly and means for satisfying one's nature. Other religious duties are not accompanied by physical pleasure but logically desirable, such as acquisition of knowledge, benefaction, helping the poor, and guiding those who have gone astray. Although such acts are not sought by

desire, they are logically desirable, and if they are done for the sake of God, their godly aspects will be mixed with their logical aspects. Hence, it is difficult to acquire devotion in them. Therefore, man cannot claim that his motivation for doing such acts has been God or another factor. If man carefully looks at most of these acts performed as religious duties, he will realize that the share of logic and desire in these acts is more than that of God, and the religious aspect has been naturally overshadowed by the aspect of logic and desire. Hence an effective weapon has not been used for suppressing the concupiscence. In these acts, Satan pollutes man's pure intention with pretense, love of fame, and other desires rendering the good deeds worthless.

Other religious duties have neither sign of physical pleasure nor logical benefits. A series of acts are neither desirable by temperament nor logic, such as taking off one's normal clothes and putting on clothes of Ihram (two pieces of unstitched clothes) making one's head and feet bare, quitting many of everyday habits, going round a house of stone, kissing a black stone installed in the corner of the Ka'aba, sevenfold shuttle between two mountains—Safa and Marwa, compulsory stay in specified times on the plain of Mina, Arafat and al-Mash'ar and throwing pebbles, which are desirable neither for temperament nor intellect. It is God's order that persuades a Muslim to do these acts without expecting to get a physical pleasure or intellectual benefit. This is because Islam is the only factor ensuring the prosperity and perfection of a Muslim who has been trained in the school of monotheism and inspired by the Holy Qur'an.

"The true religion with Allah is Islam." (The Holy Qur'an; 3:19)

Islam means to be submissive to God. Even if there are no socio-political as well as hygienic and economic benefits in enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, the virtue of being submissive to God alone is enough to encourage a wise man to do religious duties and to abstain from committing sins *"…and best of all is Allah's pleasure."* (The Holy Qur'an; 9:72)

A believing Muslim does not care whether a religious duty has a benefit or not. What is important to him is the pleasure of God. Since most of us do not pay attention to the great impact of devotion and do not know what a great blessing devotion is, we look at it dubiously not knowing that the best acts are those done for the satisfaction. We should note that those acts not having physical or logical motivation, which are merely done for God, are extremely positive in generating devotion and submission, making man devoted servant of God. We all get married but it is not known who does it for the sake of God and who does it for satisfying his instincts. We all study but it is not known who studies with the intention of promoting the Name of God and who does it for pursuing worldly goals. We all help the poor but hypocrites are not distinct from the God-seekers. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"And who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah?"* (4:125)

The Holy Qur'an further says: *"…That he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof."* (8:42)

God's Trial Is Difficult

God's commandments are aimed at revealing man's submission to the Creator. But, unfortunately, man being unaware of the secret

behind those commandments keeps on asking about the benefits of the Islamic laws and their socio-economic effects, which have their roots in materialism. This way of thinking is not limited to a specific period. All prophets have been asked such questions with sinister results.

Failure Of People Of Sabbath In God's Trial

According to the Holy Qur'an, a Jewish tribe was living in a town near the sea and their job was fishing. On God's order, the Jewish tribe was duty-bound to keep the Sabbath, that is, to be engaged in prayer and not to catch fish on that day. Since God's trial is always accompanied by difficulty, it so happened that fish would come to the surface of water abundantly on Saturdays, which was the Sabbath, but were scarce on other days. The abundance of fish on the Sabbath was so alluring that refusal to catch all those fishes was painful for the Jewish tribe. *"…Thus did we try them because they transgressed."* (The Holy Qur'an; 7:163)

Finally, avarice overcame faith and pushed the mammonists to sin. So they tried to catch fishes on Saturday with the tricks that Satan had taught them. Hence, God sent tribulation upon them. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: *"Therefore, when they revoltingly persisted in what they had been forbidden, We said to them: Be (as) apes, despised and hated."* (7:166)

Trial Of Talut's Army

Talut (Saul) whom the Holy Qur'an admires as worthy king had a strong physique and great knowledge. The Holy Qur'an says: *"He said: Surely, Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique."* (2:247)

This strong man was appointed by the prophet of that time to be the leader of the Israelis to fight their enemies. Talut mobilized a great army to fight Jalut (Goliath) the tyrant, who oppressed the Israelis. He (Saul) said to his soldiers: Be careful, for God will test you through a river on your way; he who will not drink from it though he might be very thirsty will be (considered as) obeying God and will be among my helpers and entitled to God's grace. But anyone who will drink from it is not my follower and will be deprived of God's assistance.

It was hot, the land was dry, and thirst prevailed. Suddenly, the river came into sight and the thirsty soldiers saw a river flowing with limped water before them. It requires great patience and strong faith to resist desire to pass by a river and not quench one's thirst for the sake of God. The river was a great test for the army of Talut. Satan began to tempt them as what the philosophy of suffering from thirst is while being near to a river. Why water, a source of life, should be banned. No, one must drink from it, feel fresh, and fight the enemies; not knowing that man's number one enemy is his concupiscence which disobeys God's orders. First of all, one must fight this inner enemy and then be sure that after suppressing it, God's help will come. Finally, the pleasant sight of the river and Satan's temptations weakened their will. Except for 313 soldiers, the entire army whose number was 80,000 drank from the river and revealed their weak faith against physical desires.

"So, when Talut departed with the forces, he said: Surely, Allah will try you with a river; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much of it as fills the hand; but with the exception of a few of them, they drank from it." (The Holy Qur'an; 2:249)

Another Trial Of The Children Of Israel

"And when We said: Enter this city, and then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish and enter the gate making obeisance; and say, forgiveness. We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good. But those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because thy transgressed." (The Holy Qur'an; 2: 58-9)

The unyielding tribe of the Israelis, due to the dignity of Prophet Moses (a.s) was entitled to God's grace. So, they had the impression that they became really honorable in the sight of God and became God's favorites and the most devoted servants. To test them and to make them subject to curse and punishment, God appointed certain duties for them. The prosperous land of Damascus was envisaged for their settlement provided that they, first, would enter the city through a specific gate, they, second, would enter the city while bowing as sign of humbleness to God, and, third, they would say, 'forgive us,' so that God would pardon their wrongdoings. But they said to themselves, 'why should we enter the city through a narrow gate while there were wider ones?' They entered the city not only without bowing but also with their backs forward; and instead of saying, 'forgive us,' they said indecent words. The result was a pestilence from heaven.

Prophet Ibrahim And God's Strange Trial

"And when he attained to working with him, he said: O my son, surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father, do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones. So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his

forehead, and We called out to him, saying: O Ibrahim, you have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do We reward the doers of good. Most surely, this is a manifestation trial.” (The Holy Qur’an; 37:102-6)

This is a strange scene and a strange duty! A handsome youth, much loved by an elder father has to be sacrificed for God. What a strange order and what a difficult duty! How can a kind father throw down his son and put a sharp knife on his throat with his own hands? This act is approved neither by temperament nor common sense. But here neither man’s intellect nor does his common sense have any saying, for it is the realm of love of God Who is the Only Beloved in the world. The love for others is subject to His permission and pleasure. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) then prepared himself for carrying out God’s order without any delay. He told the story to his son to know both his duty and to test the devotion of his son. The son, too, asked his father to do what he had been commanded and asked God to make him patient. What devotion it is! May God bless this stage of submission forever. Both father and son submitted. The father threw him down ready to cut his throat. A shocking scene amazed the whole world against the power of faith and love for God. Therefore, God praised the devotion of these two devoted monotheists. This is sufficient to indicate their greatness: *“And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 37:107)

To acknowledge this devotion, God said: *“Peace be upon Ibrahim. Surely, he was one of Our believing servants.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 37:109, 111.)

To sum it up, if we look at the acts commanded in God’s trial, we will not see any benefit or advisability. In certain cases, there is harm,

too, like the ban on catching fish on the Sabbath, which entailed economic loss, or the ban on drinking water from the river in the story of Talut, Ibrahim's dream to sacrifice his son, and the Israelis' entering into Damascus. In none of these cases, logical and tangible benefits could be seen. The best advantage of the said acts lies in God's commandments and the inhibitions themselves to be followed by obedience and submission, the result of which is affinity with God and attaining His pleasure.

Since certain religious duties are based on devotion to God without having social, economic, political, or hygienic benefits, certain acts related to the Hajj rites are aimed for revealing man's devotion and submission to God.

One of the advantages of Hajj is that its aspect of devotion is more evident than other religious duties. Throwing pebbles at Satan is extremely effective, for he is attempting to prevent man from obeying God by skepticism and raising questions in man's mind. For example, Satan through temptations makes man ask himself if Prophet Ibrahim's wife; Hagar, shuttled seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa in search for water, why should be do the same and in search of water? Or when Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) was in Mina for completing his mission and Satan appeared on his way trying to prevent him from obeying God's order, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) drove him away by throwing stones at him, what is he doing in Mina now? Has he, too, seen Satan on his way to throw stones at him? A devoted servant of God finds out that Satan is always on the way to steal faith. Hence, he gets ready to expel the satanic temptations from his heart. The Holy Qur'an says: *"Surely, those who guard against evil, when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them, they become mindful, then lo! They see."* (7:201)

I, too, as I have learnt lessons of devotion in the school of the prophets, take God as my Guardian and consider myself devoted servant of Him. I do not care whether certain act is beneficial or not. What I do is for obtaining God's pleasure. If I am told to shuttle between Safa and Marwa all my life for the pleasure of God, I will do it whole-heartedly.

Summary

The Hajj rites, consisting of apparently unjustifiable acts, are means of trial of men's devotion to God. Hajj makes those who follow 'self' and superficial intellect distinct from those following God.

"And they were not enjoining anything except that they should serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience." (The Holy Qur'an; 98:5)

Questions Of Practical Laws Of Islam

Perhaps it would not be out of place to discuss the practical laws of Islam here, for questions have been raised in this relation. For example, it is asked why Sura of al-Fatihah and Sura of at-Tawhid must be recited in undertone in the Dhuhr (Noon) and Asr (Afternoon) –obligatory- Prayers and recited aloud in the Maghrib (Evening) and Eshaa (Night) Prayers. Why are men banned to wear gold rings? Why is it banned to use golden and silver vessels? Why is it religiously unlawful to have the meat of pork? What is the philosophy of Hajj? When does it become necessary to perform the Tayammum (Dry Ablution)? Why is it forbidden for a Muslim to marry two sisters at the same time?

Many whys and for what reasons are answered correctly or incorrectly and on many occasions the answers increase the asker's amazement.

Note

The first and most important requirement of one who asks such questions is his belief in the acknowledged principles of Islam, that is, belief in One God, Prophethood, God’s justice, Day of Judgment, and Imamate. In the meantime, the degree of his belief in the aforesaid principles has to be taken into consideration so as to discuss with him the ideology of Islam in case of his imperfect knowledge about it.

Evidently, it is waste of time to discuss the secondary precepts of Islam with an unbeliever or someone whose belief is imperfect. How absurd it is to speak about the Ascension of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the moon’s split for him or the life span and occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.s) with a materialist who does not believe in the absolute power of God. To debate with a Twelver [73] who does not firmly believe in the sinlessness of the prophets and Imams is also useless, for he needs to perfect his ideology first. Incidentally, most of the individuals who are skeptic of the practical laws of Islam are those who are weak in their beliefs.

The Aim Of Questioning The Philosophy Of The Practical Laws Of Islam

Generally speaking, questions about the philosophy of the practical laws of Islam are raised for two reasons:

To understand the philosophy of the divine laws, and

To get more interested in doing religious duties, this is the result of getting to know the philosophy of the divine laws.

As for someone who wishes to understand the logic of the divine

laws, we should say that he is in error. Such a person needs to perfect his knowledge of the religion, get to know the prophet and the revelation as well as come to realize that the position of a prophet is above that of ordinary human beings.

He should, also, realize that what the prophets say do not come from themselves, but they are inspired by the Creator of the heavens and the earth. So, we come to the conclusion that the Holy Book and the religious laws are of the same Source. In other words, it is the All-knowing and All-wise God Who has prescribed what is lawful and what is unlawful and revealed it to the heart of His Messenger.

Why Are We In Need For A Divine Revelation?

Since we, human beings, do not have comprehensive knowledge about life and the Afterlife, and since the only One being aware of all the details of the universe is God, we are in need for guidance and religious laws, which is the same as revelation received by the prophets.

We have no option but to submit to the religious instructions. To practice the religious duties is to practice what the prophets and God have said. That is to say that I, considering myself as Muslim, obey God and His Messenger not because I have come to know about the philosophy of the religious laws, but I obey Him and His Messenger regardless of the harms and benefits that accompany certain religious acts.

What Is Religious Obedience?

Mohammad ibn Sinan wrote a letter to Imam Reza (a.s) saying, ‘Some Muslims have the impression that the dos and don’ts in Islam are not based on people’s interest or disadvantages and that there is no reason for them save obedience and devotion to God.’ Responding to this letter, Imam Reza (a.s) wrote: “Whoever has such impression of the religious precepts is in gross error, for we realize that what Allah has forbidden is not only unnecessary for human life but also it is a source of corruption pushing man to perdition.”

Sheikh Saduq, may his soul rest in peace, relates that a person went to Imam Baqir (a.s) asking, ‘Why has God forbidden drinking wine and eating carrion and pork as well as blood?’ The Imam (a.s) answered: “Allah has not made certain things lawful or unlawful because He Himself likes or dislikes them, for neither the lawful nor do the unlawful benefit or harm Him. Since Allah has created man and known what is good or bad for him, He has enjoined or forbidden certain things.” [74]

From these sayings of the Imams (a.s) it is inferred that devotion is not strict adherence like an inferior’s obedience to the orders of a superior. Obedience in religion is that when a human being realizes that his intellectual power is limited and that the religious precepts with all their benefits have their source in God’s infinite knowledge, he will naturally feel duty-bound to submit to God’s commandments.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (saw) says: “O servants of Allah, you are like patients and the Lord of the worlds being like a physician. Therefore, the interest of the patient is in what the physician prescribes for him, not in what he –the patient- likes. Therefore,

submit to Allah so as to be delivered.” [75]

It is true that the prophets are like us, human being, but they receive divine revelation. Addressing the Holy Prophet (saw), God says: *“Say: I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 18:110)

To sum it up, religious obedience is not a blind following devoid of logic, rather it is submission of a human being with limited knowledge to the All-encompassing Authority.

As for the second question about the philosophy of the practical laws of Islam, if it is aimed at getting more familiarity with the benefits of God’s commandments, to purify one’s self and society, to ensure a sound economy, to see their compatibility with the scientific researches, to highlight the value of the religious precepts, the sayings of the Imams, the scientific miracles of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Holy Qur’an, to add to one’s tranquility and peace of mind, it is welcome! In the Holy Qur’an, most of the verses express the philosophy of the commandments: *“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you… so that you many guard (yourselves) against evil.”* (2:183)

“*… Keep up prayer for My remembrance*.” (20:14)

“… And ask of them (women) from behind a curtain; this is purer for your hearts and for their hearts.” (33:53)

“And proclaim among men the pilgrimage… that they may witness advantages for them.” (22:28)

To sum it up, the necessity to act according to the religious precepts is to follow the divine revelation and not necessarily to understand their philosophy. The value of the acts of worship lies in devotion and man can have devotion when he has no motivation other than pleasing God. Then, he will become a true servant of God: *“Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah…”* (The Holy Qur’an; 24:37)

The aim of the religion is to make the earthly man ascend to heaven. Being the most perfect religion, Islam has a double vision, that is, it sees both this world and the Hereafter; it cares for the welfare of man and his moral education as well as spiritual perfection.

“As for those who believe and do good, a good final state shall be theirs and a goodly return.” (The Holy Qur’an; 13:29)

Now, instead of this discussion and instead of trying to justify all the heavenly laws with scientific theories, we should consolidate the spirit of getting to know God, the prophet, and the Imams in the hearts of the youths. It is only then that the young generation will naturally feel duty-bound to follow the Messenger of God and to obey Him with contentment and will never look for benefits in serving God.

“… What is there after the truth but error?” (The Holy Qur’an; 10:32)

Imam Sajjad (a.s) has said: “Surely, the religion of Allah cannot be comprehended with imperfect intellects, wrong opinions, or immoral criteria. Hence, there is no way to get to know the truth of the religion other than submission. Whoever submits to us will be safe from deviation, and whoever is guided in our path will be truly

guided. Whoever makes religion with his own conjecture will find perdition and one who is heavy-hearted with our orders has disbelieved in the One Who revealed the Holy Qur'an." [76]

God Is In No Need For Our Obedience

It is worth mentioning that obedience to God's commandments and performance of the divine laws do not add to God's glory and greatness, and man's disobedience to God does not reduce from His authority. In this relation, Imam Ali (a.s) says: "Now then, Allah, the Glorified the Sublime, created (the things of) the creation; He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him." [77]

The fate of those who disobeyed God is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: *"Have they not traveled in the earth and seen how was the end of those who were before them? Mightier than these were they in strength and in fortifications in the land, but Allah destroyed them for their sins; and there was not for them any defender against Allah. That was because they came to them their apostles with clear arguments, but they rejected them; therefore, Allah destroyed them; Surely He is Strong, Severe in retribution."* (40:21-2)

Jesus Christ (a.s) is quoted as saying: "Do you not know that anyone who raises his head so high that it touches the ceiling, the ceiling will break his head? But one who lowers his head, the same ceiling will serve as a canopy to give him shelter and comfort under its shade. Likewise, one who is not humble before Allah will be degraded, whereas one who is humble before Allah will be promoted." [78]

As long as the human society obeys the divine laws under the heavenly canopy, it will enjoy welfare and receive God's mercy, but if it disobeys God and becomes arrogant, God will say: *"Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian."* (The Holy Qur'an; 21:32)

The devils can never infiltrate into this guarded canopy and any time the followers of Satan have attempted to transgress, they have been badly defeated and become examples for others. *"So, We made them stories and scattered them with an utter scattering."* (The Holy Qur'an; 34:19)

Have a look at history and see what God has done to those who fought against the heavenly canopy: *"In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate the Most Merciful. Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, and send down to prey upon them birds in flocks casting against them stones of baked clay; so, He rendered them like straw eaten up?"* (The Holy Qur'an; 105:1-5)

"Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with Ad; the people of Ihram and the possessors of lofty buildings, the like of which were not created in the other cities; and with (the people of) Thamud who hewed out the rocks in the valley, and with Pharaoh, the lord of hosts; who committed inordinacy in the cities; so, they made great mischief therein? Therefore, your Lord let down upon them a portion of the chastisement. Most surely, your Lord is watching." (The Holy Qur'an; 89:7-15)

In the Holy Qur'an; Sura of al-Ankabut –the spider-, after speaking

about the painful fate of the former nations afflicted with heavenly and earthly tribulations, God says: *“So, each We punished for his sin; of them was he on whom We went down a violent storm, and of them was he whom the rumbling overtook, and of them was he who We made to be swallowed up by the earth, and of them was he who We drowned; and it did not beseem Allah that he should be unjust to them, but they were unjust to their own souls.”* (29:40)

For thousands of years, those who disobeyed God have tried to transgress the bounds of decency with their lusts and arrogance but they have been defeated with humiliation. Nevertheless, the prophets’ laws have survived and the pleasant call of ‘I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah,’ is heard at dawn, noon, and in the evening forever: *“And We exalted for you (Prophet Mohammad) your esteem.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 94:4)

Speaking about what earns people and what is worthless, God says: *“Then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits people, it tarries in the earth.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 13:17)

In the same way that the sun shines upon the decayed bodies of the unjust tribes of Ad and Thamud whom were chastised by God, it will shine upon our dead bodies. The earth keeps on going round the sun forever.

“Say: O Allah; Master of the Kingdom, Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and take away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest; in Thine hand is the good.

Surely, Thou hast power over all things. Thou makest the night pass into the day and Thou makest the day pass into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living.” (The Holy Qur’an; 3:26-7)

To sum it up, the divine laws are invincible and unchangeable: *“For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah.”* (The Holy Qur’an; 35:43)

It is the disobeying man who will come to perdition.

“… Whoever goes beyond the limits of Allah indeed does injustice to his own soul.” (The Holy Qur’an; 65:1)

For what we have said we come to the conclusion that God neither needs our obedience to Him nor does He fear our disobedience to Him, and that neither our obedience to Him benefit Him nor does our disobedience to Him harm Him. Rather it is we, human beings, who are strongly in need for God. We, human beings, are obliged to be humble for Him. If God has accepted our servitude and submission, it is a favor on His part, for if we thank Him all the time, we have done little of what we should do.

Notes:

[49] The Hadith Qudsi is the words of Almighty God reported by the Prophets and their successors.

[50] See *al-Mahajjat ul-Beidhaa*; vol. 5

[51] See *Jami’us-Sa’aadat*; Vol. 3 p.322

[52] Quoted from ad-Deilami’s *Irshad ul-Quloub*

[53] See *Mir’aat ul-Anwaar*

[54] See *Mir’aat ul-Anwaar*; the introduction, p. 13

[55] See *Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz*; 159

[56] See *Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz*; 161 (as quoted from *Bassa'ir ud-Darajaat)*

[57] See *Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz*; 160

[58] See *Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz*; 161 and *Tafsir al-Mizan*; vol. 1 p. 39

[59] See Qadi Saeed Qummi's *Asrar ul-Ibadat*, p. 6

[60] This statement is an expression of grief.

[61] See *Usul al-Kafi*; vol. 2 p.464

[62] See Sheikh Saduq's *al-Khissal*; vol. 1 p. 160 Hadith 189

[63] Black Stone is the sacred reddish-black stone built into the outside wall of the Ka'aba

[64] In the Holy Qur'an, God has related this statement to Prophet Abraham.

[65] See *Safinat ul-Bihar*; vol. 1 p.130

[66] See *Safinat ul-Bihar*; vol. 1

[67] See *Tuhaf ul-Uqoul*; 369

[68] See *Tuhaf ul-Uqoul*; 371

[69] See *al-Mahajjat ul-Beizaa*; vol. 2 p.210

[70] See *Safinat ul-Bihar*, Vol. 2 p.71

[71] See *Bihar ul-Anwar*; Vol. 10 p.210

[72] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 192

[73] Twelvers are the Shiites acknowledging twelve Imams beginning with Imam Ali and ending with Imam Mahdi (as).

[74] See *Ilal ush-Shara'ie*; vol. 2 p.169

[75] See Col*lection of Waram*, Vol 2 p.117

[76] See *Bihar ul-Anwar*; Vol. 2 p.303

[77] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon No. 184

[78] See *Tuhaf ul-Uqoul*; sermons of Jesus Christ

Stages of Hajj

Beginning Of The Journey And Going Through Different Stages

After we have become familiar with the philosophy of Hajj and its sublime goals, we should go on two parallel journeys, namely the journey of body (the physical journey) and the journey of soul (the spiritual journey). We should be keen about the inner state, the spiritual effect, and its acceptance.

Stage One: Pure Intention

“When you intend for Hajj, purify your heart from what keeps you away from Allah.” [79]

Men of heart and pilgrims of the House of God, after getting to know the meaning of Hajj and before taking provisions with them, purify their hearts and see whether their motivation in this journey is godly or not. The aim of Hajj is to express the submission to God. Hence, a pilgrim must keep away from physical desires and aims at obeying God, obtaining the rewards of the Hereafter, and escaping from the punishment of the Hereafter. If Hajj is made for fun, amusement, business, social prestige, and escape from people’s blame, its true aim—devotion is lost. To test his pure intention, a pilgrim should see whether he wants to perform Hajj for the above-mentioned purposes or he goes on Hajj for sake of God alone. If, for instance, a jurisprudent dissuades him from going on Hajj by telling that the money should be spent on a more urgent case, it should not be painful for him. But if he sees that not going on Hajj is painful for him; that he feels ashamed before people, then his intention of Hajj in not pure, and he must ask forgiveness for the same.

Stage Two: Repentance

“Then purify yourself of sins by water of repentance.” [80]

Beyond doubt, the impure have no place among the pure. Purification is a prerequisite for the beginning of the Hajj pilgrimage in the same way that prayer is not valid without purification. Hajj, too, which is the circumambulation of the Ka’aba and prayer being a part of it, requires purification that, too, with water of repentance from defaulted duties and violation of people’s rights.

People’s rights, if financial like religious tax, atonement, and personal debts must be fully paid, and for adventitious rights like backbiting, slander, dishonor, and nuisance, one must beg pardon for every right that people have to him would be like a debtor who asks him: Are you going to God’s House while you have ignored His instructions at home?

He must seek the pleasure of his parents, relatives, and neighbors, too. He must also repent for the faults he has had so as to enter into the company of the purified: “*Surely, Allah loves those who turn much to Him, and He love those purify themselves.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 2:222)

It is appropriate for him to do repentance according to the instructions reportedly coming from the Holy Prophet (saw) as mentioned in the book titled *Mafateeh ul-Jinan*.

Stage Three: Detachment From What Is Not Godly

“Say farewell to the world, comfort, and people.” [81]

One of the requirements of Hajj being a journey towards God is the

detachment from what is non-godly. It must be assumed that one will never return from this journey. It is unwise for a pilgrim who wishes to visit God's House to be preoccupied with his business, home, wife, and children. He must write his last will and testament so that if he passes away during the journey, his financial affairs will be clear and trouble no one. In the same way that he takes with him a provision for the journey and a means of transportation to Mecca, in the journey of death, too, he needs provision and means of transportation to the grave.

"Alas! The provision is little, the way is long, the journey is far and the goal is hard to reach." [82]

Then he entrusts his family to the true Guardian.

"*But Allah is the best Keeper, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful ones.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 12:64)

Imam Sajjad used to say: "When I recite these words (of supplication), I am not afraid of anything even if jinn and men are banded together against me." [83]

These words are: "In the Name of Allah, with Allah, from Allah, to Allah, and for the sake of Allah. O Allah, to You I have yielded myself, to You I have turned my face, and to You I have submitted all my affairs; so, guard me with the guard of faith from ahead of me, from beyond me, from my right side, from my left side, from above me, and from beneath me. And protect me with Your power and might—surely, all power and might belong to You alone. You are the Most High, the Most Great."

Choosing A Co-Traveler

Another important point to be observed is to choose a co-traveler in this spiritual journey. In the same way that any cause of preoccupation in this journey is harmful, any cause of remembrance of God, attention to the philosophy of Hajj, and a spiritual state is extremely useful for a pilgrim. Hence, he must choose a co-traveler who is truly reminder of God and keeps him in a permanent spiritual state. A pilgrim should refuse to associate with those who, during this spiritual journey, which might happen only once a lifetime, think of eating, sleeping, and joking all the time. A pilgrim should stop complaining about the quantity and quality of the food as well as spending time in shopping.

“Seize the opportunities, for they are like transient clouds.” [84]

Good Temperament

“Keep good company.” [85]

Good temperament is recommended but during Hajj, it is more praiseworthy, for the journey is towards God and all pilgrims are God’s guests. To honor the guests is to honor the host. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Good temperament diminishes the sins in the same way as the sun thaws ice.” [86]

Having good temperament means not only to avoid nuisance to anyone but also to tolerate other people’s bad behaviors and to serve them with respect. A pilgrim should be careful not to utter an indecent word. He should know that whatever he does is for the sake of God. Only then all hardships will be easy for him to tolerate.

Notes:

[79] See *Misbah ul-Shariah*; chapter 21

[80] See *Misbah ul-Shariah*; chapter 21

[81] See *Misbah ul-Shariah*; chapter 21

[82] See *Nahjul Balagha*; maxim 77

[83] See *Taraa'if ul-Hikam*; Vol. 2

[84] See *Safinatol-Bihar, Vol.* 2

[85] See *Misbah ul-Shariah*; chapter 21

[86] See *al-Mahajjatol Beizaa*; vol. 3

Halting Places

Halting Place I: Miqat

The Miqat is the place of getting into the state of Ihram in Umrah and Tamattu'. The following five places serve as Miqat:

Masjid ash-Shajarah (also known as Thu'l-Hulayfah) is the Miqat for people of Medina who intend to go to Mecca.

Juhafah is the Miqat for those who head for Mecca through Damascus and Egypt.

Al-Aqiq is the Miqat for those who go to Mecca from Najd and Iraq.

Yalamlam is the Miqat for those who go to Mecca from Yemen.

Qarn al-Manaazil is the Miqat for people who go on Hajj through Ta'if.

All those who head for God's House have to stop in the Miqat, take off their ordinary clothes, put on Ihram, and go to the Sacred Mosque while saying, 'Labbayk'.

The Miqat is a station where a pilgrim waits for permission to enter God's House and purification from all pollutions. Hence, performing Ghusl (ritual washing of the body) before putting on Ihram is a praiseworthy act for a pilgrim. After performing Ghusl, men wrap themselves with two pieces of unstitched white clothes instead of elegant clothes, which make people distinct from one another. They look like dead people in shroud, detached from the world and entering the realm of submission. A pilgrim takes off the robe of disobedience and puts on the garment of piety, prepared for saying: "Yes, here I am, O Lord, here I am. Here I am, there is no partner for You, here I am. Surely, praise, grace, and kingship are Yours. There is no partner for you. Here I am."

When a pilgrim gets into the state of Ihram, he enters into a

sanctuary and is entitled to a special position, which he should really appreciate. For this reason, the prophets and Imams (a.s) looked pale, trembled, and in some cases became unconscious in the state of Ihram and in saying Labbayk.

Talbiyah (saying Labbayk) is the special words pronounced by the pilgrims of God's House. It is a song of love chanted by the bird of Paradise in response to a heavenly and invisible call. Repetition of Talbiyah is a praiseworthy act of Ihram and a motto for Muhrim (one in state of Ihram).

"When the Messenger of Allah became Muhrim, Archangel Gabriel came to him saying: Tell your companions to say 'Labbayk' and sacrifice a camel." [87]

The Holy Prophet (saw) is quoted by Imam Baqir (a.s) as saying: "Whoever says Labbayk for seventy times out of faith and devotion, Allah will assign thousands of angels to witness him immunity from the Fire (of Hell) and schism." [88]

The Talbiyah of Imam Sadiq (a.s) was as follows: "Yes, here I am, O Lord, here I am. Here I am, there is no partner for You, here I am. Surely, praise and blessings belong to You and the kingdom, too. There is no partner for You, here I am. The Lord of the ways of Ascent, her I am, here I am. You call to the dwelling of peace, here I am, here I am. O Forgiver of sins, here I am, here I am. You are the worthiest of being answered, here I am, here I am. Lord of Glory and Honor, here I am, her I am. I am coming towards You fearfully and willingly, here I am, here I am. You are the Beginner and all the returns are towards You, here I am, here I am. Remover of all sorrows, here I am, here I am. I am Your servant and the son of

Your two servants, here I am, her I am. O Generous One, here I am." [89]

Holding of Tongue Important in State of Ihram

A pilgrim has to hold his tongue, for a great number of man's sins results from his tongue. A man's deeds can be ruined as a result of a slip of tongue. The Holy Prophet (saw) says: "Has the people's being thrown into the Fire (of hell) on their faces been for any reason other than their tongues? The faith of a servant of Allah will not become straight unless his heart is straight and his heart is not straight unless his tongue is straight. Allah may have mercy upon a servant who speaks good words and enjoys its blessings, refrains from speaking indecent words and is safe from its sinister consequence. He who believes in Allah and the Last Day must say good wording or keep silent." [90]

Therefore, it is incumbent on the pilgrims to be careful about what they say and not to invalidate their great acts. They must refrain from telling lies, backbiting, swearing, taking oaths, self-praising, finding faults with others, mocking, joking, and vexing others.

"The pilgrimage is (performed in) the well-known months; so whoever determines the performance of the pilgrimage therein, there shall be no intercourse nor fornication nor quarreling amongst one another. (The Holy Qur'an; 2:197)"

The Holy Prophet (saw) says: "On many occasions, a man may say something to make his companions laugh but as a result of the same words he will go far from Allah's mercy as much as the distance between the earth and the heavens." [91]

“Whoever keeps silent will be delivered.” [92]

Jesus Christ (a.s) is quoted as saying: “Do not speak too much save in remembering Allah, for those who speak too much but do not remember Allah are hardhearted but they do not know.” [93]

Therefore, a pilgrim should keep on remembering God and pronouncing His Names. To be reckless in a state of Ihram, to let eyes, ears, and tongues free to do what they wish, to insult the cook, the courier, and the co-travelers means to dishonor the Host in His House. We seek refuge to God from ignorance.

O brethren of sincerity and God’s confidants, let us say Labbayk from the bottom of our hearts in unison: Yes, here I am, O Lord, here I am. Here I am, there is no partner for You, here I am.

Halting Place II: Mataaf

“*… And let them go round the Ancient House.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 22:29)

We now enter the city of Mecca where the Messenger of God was born and the Holy Qur’an was revealed. It is the descending place of the revelation and the angels. It is a city of security. Its safety has covered both plants and animals. No one has the right to cut off a plant, to harm an animal even to scare away the birds form their nests. For this reason, the birds of the Sacred Mosque are accustomed to bet people and fly here and there without being scared. This, by itself, shows the spread of overall justice in the world of Islam to the extent that even plants and animals are secure from aggression let alone the human beings who have superior rights.

Mecca, the Mother of cities, is the birthplace of the real civilizations of human beings, a civilization devoid of corruption, indecency, and plundering, a civilization that generates godly, trustworthy, truthful, faithful, and pious human beings. Such a civilization produced the Holy Qur'an that has its rise from the horizon of Mecca. Therefore, Mecca is the mother of the cities where actual humanity lived. Mecca is the generator of a magnificent human civilization devoid of bestiality. Mecca is the city of monotheism, a sacred center, which houses the Ancient House, the ancient temple as well as the international Muslims' Kiblah.

We now go through the streets of Mecca, though overcrowded but dignified and tranquillizing, and approach the Sacred Mosque. We see the flood of pilgrims pour into the magnificent Mosque and enthusiastically go towards the Ka'aba through different gates opened to the guests of God. We, too, enter the Mosque and our eager look falls on the Ka'aba, and edifice of glory and majesty having its head in heaven, casting its shade upon God's servants and spreading its lap to give comfort to God's guests who have come here from distant places with much trouble.

Like moths attracted to bright lights, the pilgrims, fascinated by the Ka'aba, go round and embrace it as the dearest one, expressing their need to the One Who is free from want. They are deeply impressed by the scene. They start weeping and praising the House of God:

"Praise is due to Allah Who gave you dignity and honor making you pilgrimage for men and place of security, blessed and guidance for the people of the world." [94]

Yes, this is the House of the Lord of the heavens and the earth. It is a house whose magnificence makes the kings' hearts sink and whose majesty and awe made the prophets prostrate themselves before it saying:

"O Lord, Your humble, poor, and needy servant has come to Your House. Do him favor by giving a portion of Paradise to him." [95]

"O Lord, the House is Yours, the Sanctuary is Yours, the servant too is Yours." [96]

Imam Baqir by the side of the Ka'aba

Aflah, the slave whom was set free by Imam Baqir (a.s) reports:

I was accompanying Imam Bqir (a.s) during Hajj. When he entered the Sacred Mosque and his look fell on the Ka'aba, he was overwhelmed by weeping. I said, 'My parents be ransoms for you, people are watching you, can you not lower your voice to a whisper?' The Imam answered, 'O Aflah, this is Allah's House, why should I not be weeping? Perhaps He will look at me favorably making me delivered in the Hereafter.'

The Imam then circumambulated the Ka'aba, performed the Tawaf Prayer in its proper place, and went into prostration. When he raised his head, I saw that his forehead was wet with tears. [97]

Beware, This is the precinct of the Ka'aba, and a Holy Place

This is the place before which all the prophets from Adam (a.s) to the seal of the prophets (saw) as well as the immaculate Imams were humble, made circumambulation, and prostrated themselves.

Traditions say that after the descending of Adam (a.s) –from Paradise-, God made a dome of white pearl in the present place of the Ka'aba for him to circumambulate it. The dome survived until the time of Noah's flood when God took it to the heavens. Since then, the site of the Ka'aba became a place for circumambulation for the prophets (a.s) until the time of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) who was missioned by God to build the Ka'aba.

"*And when we assigned to Ibrahim the place of the House*." (The Holy Qur'an; 22:26).

"*And when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:127)

With the passage of time, the Ka'aba was sometimes completely or partially subject to changes. Yet it continued to survive with its majesty and glory and the ummah is enjoying its blessings.

Survival of the Ka'aba, a wonder

It is a wonder that all the royal palaces built throughout history have been demolished but the Ka'aba, a house built of mud and stone about four thousand years ago by Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail (a.s) in a parched land is still upright and will continue to be loved by human beings until the Day of Judgment.

What is more wonderful is the attraction of this House. So many glorious and majestic buildings in the world are found in areas of good climate, but the Ka'aba attracts people to itself without having means of entertainment or being satisfying people's pleasure. The reason however is natural. It is God Himself Who has created this attraction in people's hearts through Prophet Ibrahim's supplication:

"*And proclaim among men the pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 22:27)

A quotation from Imam Sadiq (a.s) refers to the same secret:

"When Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (a.s) were assigned to build the House and they completed it, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) sat on a pillar calling people to Hajj. Then people in men's loins gave a positive response to the call of Allah. Whoever said Labbayk for ten times performs ten times of Hajj, whoever said for five times performs five times of Hajj, whoever said more performs more, and whoever said Labbayk once performs only one time of Hajj and one who did not say Labbayk performs no Hajj." [98]

Importance of the Circumambulation of the Ka'aba

Circumambulation means to go round something. This act shows the utmost degree of love to the extent that a lover wishes to sacrifice himself for the beloved. A real pilgrim who has thirst for meeting his Beloved has been detached from everything. By going round the House of the Beloved, he wishes to prove that he desires nothing but God. The planets circumambulate the sun, for they take everything from it. Inside an atom, the electrons circumambulate the protons. The whole universe ranging from the invisible particles to the planets and galaxies circumambulate. Man, being a part of the universe, should circumambulate, too, with the difference that the planets circumambulate in a compulsory way according to the laws of nature, but man, the rational being and possessor of free will, circumambulates with his logic and will a House God has appointed to honor human beings. Hence, it is natural for Muslims to offer their

prayers, to sit, to stand, to recite the Holy Qur'an, to sleep, to lie down at the moment of death, to be put in grave, and finally to be in that direction during their lifetimes and death.

"Say: Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (The Holy Qur'an; 6:162)"

The position of One Who has the Honor of Circumambulation

As for one who has given a positive response to God's call and has managed to attend His House, he is honorable guest received by the Honorable Host Who gives abundantly and freely:

"O' He Who gives much in return of very little deeds." [99]

Imam Ali (a.s) was asked: What is the meaning of a pilgrim's act when he restores to the Ka'aba and catches hold of its curtains? He (a.s) answered:

"His act is like one who has committed an offence against another person and now while regretting, he appeals to him, takes hold of his garment, and humbly asks for pardon." [100]

Under such circumstance, a magnanimous person is required to show favor and forgiveness. God Who is the most magnanimous will be certainly generous and forgiving towards His servant.

The following glad tidings reached us from the Holy Prophet (saw):

"For every pilgrim who circumambulates the Ka'aba at noon bareheaded and bare-footed, takes short paces, lowers his eyes out of modesty, touches the Black Stone in every circumambulation,

harms no one, and keeps on remembering Allah, Allah will write seventy thousand rewards for him, remove from him seventy thousand wrongdoings, promotes him seventy thousand ranks, sets free on his behalf seventy thousand slaves worth ten thousand dirhams each, give him the right of intercession for seventy persons of his relatives, and fulfill seventy thousand of his demands either immediately or later on.” [101]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Whoever looks at the Ka’aba, as long as his eyes are on it, rewards are written for him and his wrongdoings are written off until he turns his look from it.” [102]

“There are a hundred and twenty kinds of Allah’s mercy in the precinct of the Ka’aba; sixty of them are for those who circumambulate, forty for those who perform prayers there, and twenty for whose who look at it.” [103]

Therefore, one must take care to obtain the highest degrees of divine profit with the easiest acts.

“That is Allah’s grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. (The Holy Qur’an; 62:4)”

Halting Place III: Mas’aa [104]

“Surely, the Safa and the Marwa are among the signs appointed by Allah. (The Holy Qur’an; 2:158)”

After the completion of the circumambulating the Ka’aba and the Tawaf Prayer, a pilgrim must perform Sa’y, that is, he has to walk between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa for seven times starting from Mount Safa and ending with Mount Marwa. By this cat, a pilgrim

reveals his spiritual worry that he cannot abandon the Beloved's House. Hence, he leaves it and returns. Standing on the top of Mount Safa, he eagerly looks at the Ka'aba and sheds tears, has communion with God and comes down for Mount Marwa with special sincerity, join the crowd whose supplication fills the Mas'a. He traverses this distance with Harwala (fast pace), which is praiseworthy act. Every time he goes forward and returns, he becomes more purified. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says:

"There is no position more honorable to Allah than the Mas'a, for every arrogant and disobedient become humble there." [105]

With this worrisome shuttle, a pilgrim is reminded of a worried mother who, four thousand years ago, shuttled seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa in search of water for her thirsty infant, supplicating to God until her prayer was answered, according to the Holy Qur'anic Verse:

"*… or who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil?*" (27:62)

Hence, limpid water gushed out of that dead land and gave new life to Hagar –the mother- and Ismail –the child. The wonder is that the same water is gushing out to this date from the well known as Zamzam, giving a spiritual life to the pilgrims. To drink from it and pour upon one's head are praiseworthy acts.

"O Lord, make it useful knowledge, abundant subsistence, and healing for every disease." [106]

If man reflects a little bit on this holy place, he will most probably go

through a spiritual change and realize how gates of God's mercy are opened to the pure and devoted servants.

Supplication by a broken-hearted mother can cleave unshakable mountains causing gushing of water from dead land and opening the gates of favor and mercy from an invisible world.

"*But if they turn back, say: Allah is sufficient for me, there is no Allah but He; on Him do I rely and He is the Lord of mighty power.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 9:129)

Man's call upon God is answered only if such a call is from the bottom of the heart. A spiritual change makes dried trees green and fruitful, and causes water to gush out of a hot desert. Virgin Mary (a.s) who had the pangs of childbirth and was moaning to God saying: "*Oh, would that I had died before this and had been a thing quite forgotten.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 19:23), heard God's voice through her infant: "Then (the child) called out to her from beneath her: Grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you; and shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates. So, eat and drink and refresh the eye. (The Holy Qur'an; 19:24-6)" To defend his mother's innocence, the infant Jesus (a.s) spoke, "*Surely, I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 19:30)

Also, a Sura has taken the name of Virgin Mary so as to testify to her purity and innocence until the Day of Judgment.

Hagar, a faithful woman and wife of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) who has been abandoned in a burning desert according to God's order, relies on God alone and has set her hope in Him. What else can she do

save supplicating to Him:

"My Lord and Nourisher, have I anyone except You from Whom I can seek the dislodging of my evils and understanding of my problems?" [107]

The result of Hagar's supplication was that limpid water gushed out from under her infant's feet:

"… *And whoever is careful of his duty to Allah, He will make for him an outlet and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him*." (The Holy Qur'an; 65:2-3)

Hagar's act, which is a symbol of monotheism, reliance on God, and detachment from what is not godly, has become one of the pillars of the Hajj rites and a duty for the Hajj pilgrims. The act of Sa'y must be performed with the presence of heart and effort must be made not to miss the spiritual opportunity.

Halting Place IV: Mount Arafat

The first days of Dhu'l-Hijja are full of tumult in Mecca. Like a kind mother, this holy city opens her arms to the pilgrims. Thanks to the blessing God has bestowed on Mecca, pilgrims are not in strait in terms of accommodations. They all feel comfortable and have peace of mind.

Those pilgrims who intend to perform Hajj at-Tamattu' have to stay in Mecca to perform Umrah first. Those intending to perform Hajj al-Qiran and Hajj al-Ifrad and those whose Hajj precedes Umrah enter Mecca in groups so as to put on Ihram, to say Labbayk, and to leave

Mecca for Arafat. Umrah is an individual rite that does not need to be coordinated with others and can be performed on any day. However, Hajj, being a social event, must begin and end on a special day. Therefore, all those who intend to perform Hajj have to come to Mecca before the eighth of Dhu'l-Hijja and those who are late for an excuse have to join the pilgrims on the ninth of Dhu'l-Hijja before noon.

The huge caravan of the pilgrims moves towards Arafat in the afternoon of the eighth day. Heads are bare and bodies covered with two pieces of white unstitched clothes. Having with them provision for a few-day stay in the plain, and saying Labbayk whose spiritual echo is filling Mecca and the north-eastern plains, the pilgrims move in groups to gather in the plain of Arafat at noon of the ninth day.

Where is Arafat?

Arafat is a smooth and flat plain about twenty-four kilometers away from Northern Mecca in the lap of Jabal ur-Rahmah (literally meaning, Mount of Mercy). Arafat is a holy place God has appointed to receive His guests. The banquet is in Mount Mercy so that all guests can enjoy God's infinite blessings each according to his capacity.

Man will not become familiar with God as long as he is attached to the world

If man is left to himself, like children who have no power of distinction, he is attracted towards colorful toys. During Prophet Mohammad's Midnight Ascension, God said to him:

"O Ahmed, beware of being like a child who is deceived when looking at something green and yellow or tasting something sour

and sweet.” [108]

God’s address is aimed to make man aware of his grave position. In the plain of Arafat, a pilgrim is like a dead man who has been detached from everything and wearing a shroud and waiting for God’s mercy. It is in this state that man can have communion with God and say from the bottom of his heart:

“Let those eyes which do not see You as Watching be blind and let the asset (life) of a servant who has no share of Your love lead to loss.” [109]

The rite of staying in Arafat begins at the noon of the ninth of Dhu’l-Hijja and ends at the sunset of the same day. The time of this religious act is short but its divine blessings are great. Hearing a beggar asking people for something, Imam Sajjad (a.s) said:

“Woe to you! Are you asking people for help in this place while Allah’s mercy today is so comprehensive that what is in mountains is hoped to receive His general mercy and become prosperous.” [110]

By ‘what is in mountains’ the Imam (a.s) perhaps meant plants growing on the mountains as a result of whose transformation a prosperous man would be born. A man in the Sacred Mosque asked Imam Sadiq (a.s): “Whose sin is greater than others?” The Imam (a.s) answered:

“He who stays in Arafat and al-Muzdelifa, performs the Sa’y between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa, circumambulates the Ka’aba, performs prayer in the standing-place of Ibrahim, and after completing all these acts says to himself or has the impression that

Allah has not forgiven him is the biggest sinner.” [111]

Imam Baqir (a.s) says: “The duaas –supplications- of every pious or impious man who stays in Arafat and al-Mash’ar will be absolutely answered. The duaas of a pious man will be fulfilled in matters regarding this world and the Hereafter but the duaas of an impious man will be fulfilled only in matters regarding this world.” [112]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “For a believing man of any village who stays in Arafat, Allah will forgive all the believing people of that village, and for a single man of a believing family who stays in Arafat, Allah will forgive all the believing members of that family.” [113]

Day of Arafat is the Day of Supplication to God

The Day of Arafat among all the days of the year has a special advantage for duaas—supplication to God. Duaas and asking for settlement of the needs of this world and the Hereafter are some of the most important acts of today. Fasting on such a day with all its virtues, if it leads to weakness in supplication will become blameworthy. Duaa opens the gates of God’s mercy to His servants.

Duaa has its own effect

The Immaculate Imams (a.s) say that there are two ways to win God’s mercy: deed and duaa. Those who practice good deeds enter through the gate of justice and are rewarded, but those who resort to duaa enter through the gate of grace and receive mercy.

Ibn-Fahd Hilli, in his book titled *Oddatol Daee*, quotes the prayer book of Mohammad ibn Saffar on the authority of the Holy Prophet (saw) as saying:

“Request from Allah so that He will grant. Allah bestows blessing upon a group of His servants in return for their deeds, and to another group in return for their sincere supplications. Then He will gather both groups in Paradise. The first will say: Our Lord, We were men of good deeds and You granted our requests but how about these people? Allah will say: My servants, I gave you your rewards fully. Those people too requested from Me and I gave them a share of My abundant Grace and Mercy. I will give to anyone I wish.” [114]

Those who perform their religious duties and reach the highest degree of eternal prosperity enter Paradise through the gate of Deed according to the Qur’anic Verse: “*(This is) a reward for what they used to do.*” (56:24)

There is another gate by the name of Request or supplication. Not all people can enter through this gate. In the same way that practicing good deed is not easy, requesting from God is not easy either, for it requires a living heart, weeping eyes, and a spiritual state. God says: “*Call upon Me, I will answer you.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 40:60)

Let us now become unison with Imam Sajjad (a.s) and say: “And I, my Allah, am Thy servant whom Thou commanded to supplicate and who said: I am at Thy service and disposal. Here I am, my Lord, thrown before Thee. I am he whose back offenses have weighed down! I am he whose lifetime sins have consumed! I am he who was disobedient in his ignorance, while Thou didst not deserve that from him!” [115]

Mohammad ibn Hassan Saffar, in his book of supplication, quotes the Holy Prophet (saw) as saying: Two persons whose deeds were

the same will enter Paradise. But one of the two will see the other superior. Hence, he will say: 'My Lord, we have done the same deeds. What is his superior position for?' Allah will say: 'He requested from Me but you did not.' (Then the Holy Prophet (saw) said:) "Request from Allah as much as you can, for your request is not great for Allah."

Moyasser, a narrator, quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: "O Moyasser, call upon Allah and do not say what is destined will happen. There is with Allah a position you will not attain save through supplication. If a servant shuts his mouth and does not request anything from Allah, he will be given nothing. Therefore, request so that you will be given. O Moyesser, every door that is knocked will be opened." [116]

Beware! Here is Arafat

Here is the plain of Arafat, resembling the Day of Judgment. What a tumult! Millions of pilgrims from different nations have converged on this plain. Wearing shrouds and bareheaded, all the pilgrims have raised their hands in supplication in this hot plain. What incentive has brought them to this wasteland from their homes? Have they come here under any force or allure of anything? They have come here to give positive response to God's call. They have come here to enjoy the divine banquet to win God's pleasure. It is the day of benefaction. O Lord, this edifice is the same place where Adam confessed his sin and was forgiven. It is the place where Ibrahim supplicated to God and won His favor. All messengers of God prostrated themselves in this place. The Holy Prophet (saw), too, expressed his servitude to God here. Accompanied by his friends, Imam Hussein (a.s), too, raised his hands in supplication to God in this place. The sun on the day of Arafat set amidst the moaning and

weeping of Imam Hussein (a.s) and his companions. Can a person not be moved to tears in this place where God does not withhold His generosity and forgiveness? It is said that the biggest sin belongs to one who returns from Arafat thinking that he has not been forgiven; that is, he is disappointed with God's mercy.

Addressing Jesus (a.s), God says: "O Jesus, how long should I wait and show well wish for the people to turn to Me?" [117]

A Hadith Qudsi says: "If they who turn their backs to Me know how eager I am for their turning to Me, they will certainly die out of eagerness to Me and their body joints will fall apart." [118]

"O, He who comes toward those who come towards Him and grants gifts and bestows bounty upon them through tenderness! He is Compassionate and Clement toward those heedless of His remembrance and loving and tender in drawing them to His door!" [119]

"*And He it is Who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deeds.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 42:25)

Calling upon God and saying, 'O Lord' from the bottom of heart is sufficient to be answered.

"I know well that for the travelers who set out onto Thee, the destination is very near." [120]

Not only is God Forgiving but also, "*Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 25:70)

Imam Sajjad (a.s) words: “O’ He Who changes the evil deeds into manifold good deeds.” [121]

Since repentance is good deed, it has a tenfold reward: “*Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it*.” (The Holy Qur’an; 6:160)

As long as we are in Arafat, we can do nothing except requesting from Him.

A mystic was asked, ‘What have you brought to this door?’ He answered: “A beggar who comes to the House of the King is not asked, what have you brought, rather he is asked: What do you need, beggar?”

It is said that a Dervish [122]set out for a king’s palace. They said to him: Take off your tattered clothes and put on new ones, for they do not fit the occasion. The Dervish said: What shall I do, for I have no other clothes? There is no blame in going to the royal palace in tatters, but there is blame if one comes out of the palace in tatters.

Likewise, if a man with sins goes to God’s House, he is in no way to be blamed, but if he returns from His House with the same sins and ashamed of his sins, it is contrary to God’s dignity and expectation.

Good Tidings: Imam Mahdi (a.s) is present in Arafat

A great source of happiness and hope for forgiveness of those staying in Arafat is the presence of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) in the plain of Arafat every Hajj season; hence, Arafat becomes dignified and descending place for the angels and a source of blessings for those staying there.

Ubaid ibn Zurara quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying:

“People will miss their Imam, but he will witness every season of Hajj. Yet, he can see them but they cannot.” [123]

“By Allah I swear, Imam Mahdi witnesses the season of Hajj every year. He can see and know people and they can see him but cannot know him.” [124]

O God, we, pilgrims, turn to You and raise our hands in begging through the grace of Imam Mahdi (a.s) who has blessed this plain and has raised his hands in duaa in front of our gathering. We are sure the Imam’s honor is so great that whoever turns to You under his shelter and raises his hand in supplication under the shelter of his hands will not be deprived of God’s mercy.

The Holy Prophet (saw) is quoted by Selman the Persian as saying: “Allah says: O My servant, has it not happened that someone requests something great from you but you will not fulfill his desire unless he brings an intercessor who is dear to you? Let it be known to you that the most honorable and respectable men to Me are Mohammad (saw), his brother Ali (a.s), and the Imams (a.s) who are the media of nearness to Me. Therefore, if you have a desire for a profit or removing of a loss, call Me through Mohammad (saw) and his pure household. Then I will fulfill the desire in the best manner.” [125]

Take the opportunity for Duaa

As requirements for duaa to be answered have been met and thousands of hands have been raised in supplication, the pilgrims in Arafat should speak to God with the supplications reached us from the Imams (a.s) in this relation, Imam Hussein's Duaa recited on such a day in Arafat is the most comprehensive. Also, Duaa 47 of *al-Sahifat al-Sajjadiyya*, containing theme of servitude is extremely useful for those who do not know Arabic can simply talk to God in their own languages and confide their grievances with their Most Kind Creator and know that there is no better confidant for them than God Who has said: "*And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:186)

Considering the above-mentioned Qur'anic Verse, is there any fear or concern left in man's heart? The answer is a definite 'No,' for God Himself says: "*So whoever believes in his Lord, he should neither fear loss nor being overtaken by disgrace.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 27:13)

When there are no ears to listen to our grievances, it is God Who is to listen to our requests.

"O my adjacent Neighbor, O my sturdy pillar, O companion of every stranger, o intimate of everyone alone, o refuge of every outcast, o shelter of every wanderer…" [126]

Duaa for reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s)

The desire for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may our souls be ransoms for him) who is a cure of the physical and spiritual diseases

of human society must be at the top of the list of our requests today. All social and individual misfortunes, ignorance, poverty, moral corruption, and maladies afflicting human beings will be removed with the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s) and security and justice will prevail in the world in the light of his divine guidance. So, let us supplicate to God in unison and say: “Where is the one prepared to annihilate the oppressors? Where is the one awaited for straightening the crookedness and dishonesty? Where is the one expected (Imam Mahdi) for abolishing oppression and transgression? Where is the one stored for reviving the obligatory command and Sunnah (of the Holy Prophet)? Where is the one selected for resuscitating the reality of the nation and the religion? Where is the one expected for enlivening the Book and the doctrinal provisions? Where is the enlivener of the facts of the religion and its adherents? Where is the breaker of the might of the transgressors? Where is the demolisher of the edifices of polytheism and hypocrisy? Where is the destroyer of the followers of transgression, disobedience, and rebellion? Where is the eradicator of the branches of errors and dispute? Where is the destroyer of the signs of evil and egoistic tendencies? Where is the severer of the cords of falsehood and calumniation? Where is the destroyer of the vicious and disobedient people? Where is the eradicator of the followers of obstinacy and misguidance and the renegade? Where is the one who honors the friends and debases the enemy? Where is the gate of Allah through which all should enter? Where is the countenance of Allah through which the friends attend towards him? Where is the means stretching from the earth to the heaven? Where is the uniter of the companions of virtue and divine pleasure? Where is the avenger of the blood of the prophets and their children? Where is the seeker of revenge for the blood of the martyred ones of Karbala? Where is the triumphant one (who will overcome) over one who

transgressed against him and maligned him? O son of Ahmed, is there a way through which you may be met? May our day (of separation) join the day of reappearance by which we enjoy? When shall we arrive at your streams to quench our thirst?" [127]

When we are said infinite oppression and grave injustice pave the way for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s), despair gives its place to hope in our hearts making waiting for you something pleasant. So, we tolerate all hardship in the hope of your reappearance and keep on supplicating.

"So, help, O' helper of those who seek help, your poor afflicted servant. And show him his Master: O severer of strength and through him (Imam Mahdi) remove his (Your servant's) grief and sorrow. And cool the burning of his hurt, O You who are firm in the Heavenly Throne of power and towards Whom is the return and ultimate end." [128]

Ask forgiveness for your parents, relatives, and all believers in Arafat

Now that we are blessed with this divine grace and our requests and desires are fulfilled, we should seek forgiveness for our parents, relatives, neighbors, all believers, and the deceased ones. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "A man's supplication for his absent brother increases the sustenance and saves from evils." [129]

Imam Kazim (a.s) says: "Whoever supplicates for his absent brother in faith, a call from the Divine Throne will say: let one hundred thousand times more be for you. So, I thought it was not advisable to leave one hundred thousand supplications certainly answered for one that might or might not be answered." [130]

What a Blessed Duaa!

Ibn Abi-Umeir reports the following on the authority of Zeid an-Nersi: Muawieh ibn Wahab and I were in Arafat. He was reciting duaa while his eyes were full of tears. Listening carefully to him, I found out that he was not reciting a singly duaa for himself, rather he was supplicating for people from here and there mentioning their names and father's names. When the pilgrims left Arafat, I said to him, 'O uncle, I saw something strange about you.' He asked, 'what was strange?' I answered, 'In this holy place, you considered your brethren prior to yourself and recited duaa for them!' He said, 'O my nephew, do not be surprised, for I heard my master and master of every believing man and woman and master of the former and the coming generations after his immaculate fathers (a.s) (if I lie, let my ears become deaf, my eyes blind, and deprived of the Holy Prophet's intercession) as saying:

"Whoever supplicates Allah for his absent brother in faith, an angel from heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let a hundred thousand times more than it be for you.' And an angel from the second heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be two hundred thousand times more for you.' And an angel from the third heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be three hundred thousand times more for you.' And an angel from the fourth heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be four hundred thousand times for you.' And an angel from the fifth heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be five hundred thousand time more for you.' And an angel from the sixth heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be six hundred thousand times more for you.' And an angel from the seventh heaven will call: 'O servant of Allah, let there be seven hundred thousand times more for you.' Then, Allah will say: 'I am the Rich Who will never become poor. O servant of Allah, let there be a

million times more for you.'"

'O my nephew, which is better: to supplicate for oneself or for others?' [131]

Now, Supplication to God

O Lord, now that You like to hear Your servant's duaa for others and fulfill them, we ask You through the affinity and love of Your most beloved creatures; Mohammad and his household (a.s) to hasten the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s) and guide the human society on the right path of guidance. Also, make the ummah united to defend itself against atheism. Protect our youths against corruption. Do not separate our children and us from the Holy Qur'an and the household of the Holy Prophet (saw) in this world and the Hereafter. Fill our hearts with Your love and that of the Imams (a.s). Heal the patients all over the world very soon. Make our women chaste. Give a share of this reward to our parents, relatives, neighbors, friends, and the deceased. Keep us from the fire of Your wrath.

The Sun in Arafat is setting

The sun in Arafat is setting and God's banquet is coming to an end. O my beloved, I know this much that this humble person was Your guest and You, the Lord of the heavens and the earth were my Generous Host. Then, I have the right to say:

"My Allah, who is the one who has come before Thee seeking hospitability? Who is the one who has dismounted at Thy door hoping for magnanimity, and to who Thou hast not shown it? Is it good that I come back from Thy door, turned away in disappointment, while I know of no patron qualified by beneficence but Thee?" [132]

How proper it is to conclude the last moment of staying in Arafat with the prayer of Imam Hussein (a.s) on such a day. Here is a summarized translation of the prayer:

“O Allah, we are turning our faces to You in this evening that You glorified and honored by Mohammad— Your Prophet, Messenger, Chosen one among Your creatures, Keeper of Your revelation, bearer of Your good tidings and warnings, and the bright light with whom You have blessed the Muslims and whom You have made mercy from people. Bless him and his household— the chosen ones, the pure, and the immaculate, and include us by means of Your reprieve. To You, voices of different tongues have directed. O Allah, give us in this evening a share of the blessings that you give to Your servants, light of guidance, mercy that You spread, blessings that You reveal, wellbeing that You extend, and abundant sustenance; You are certainly the Most Merciful of the merciful ones. O Allah, in this very time, include us with the successful, the thriving, the blessed, and the winning, and do not deprive us of Your mercy and of that for which we hope, and do not refute us with disappointment, and do not reject us from Your door. You are certainly the Most Generous of the generous ones and the Most Munificent of the munificent. We are directing towards You with full confidence and towards yours Sacred House with full intentions” [133]

The sun in Arafat set amid tears, moaning, and lamentations of Imam Hussein (a.s) and his companions who then set out for al-Mash’ar al-Haram.

Good Tidings

Imam Sajjad (a.s) says: “During the Farewell Hajj, the pilgrims’ stay in Arafat was completed, the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “O Bilal, tell people to keep silent.” When they did, he (saw) said: “Today, Allah has favored you. He has forgiven the good ones among you and bestowed upon you the right of intercession for the bad ones. Hence, He forgave the bad ones with the intercession of the good ones. Now, set out and all of you have been forgiven by Allah’s mercy.” [134]

Obviously the question of people’s rights is another topic in a way that the consent and satisfaction of the owner of a right is prerequisite for God’s forgiveness. Hence, all were forgiven “save those who violate people’s rights, for God in Just and will take the right of the oppressed from the oppressors.” [135]

Halting Place V: Al-Mash’ar Al-Haram

“So, when you hasten on from Arafat, then remember Allah near the Holy Monument— Al-Mash’ar al-Haram. (The Holy Qur’an; 2:198)”

Day of Arafat and staying in the plain of Arafat has come to an end and it is now the eve of the Eid ul-Adha. [136] The pilgrims are prepared to move towards al-Mash’ar al-Haram. With the light of God’s cognition upon all hearts, we now depart from Mount Mercy to stay overnight in al-Mash’ar al-Haram and attend another banquet of God.

It is praiseworthy to delay the Maghrib –evening- and Eshaa –night- (obligatory) Prayers to be performed in al-Mash’ar al-Haram, but because of too many pilgrims, slow traffic and the fear of default, the Maghrib and Eshaa Prayers are performed in Arafat. After having a

light dinner, the pilgrims set out for al-Mash'ar. There is a tumult among the crowd, for every pilgrim is busy taking away the tent, packing his personal effects, and getting on into buses. So, great care is needed not to be distracted. Under such circumstances, Satan tries to keep man preoccupied so as to deprive him of his spiritual state. The pilgrims might get angry at getting a seat in front or back of the bus, the quantity of food, or carriage of the effects. Hence, they should be as tolerant, soft, and good-tempered as possible, for God says: "*Whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the provision is the guardian of oneself, and be careful of your duty to Me, O men of understanding.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:197)

Restrain your anger

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "Whoever restrains his anger Allah will increase his honor in this world and the Hereafter. Allah says: *Those who restrain their anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good to others*." (The Holy Qur'an; 3:134) [137]

Al-Mash'ar or The meeting place of God's lovers

Al-Mash'ar is also called '*al-Muzdalifah*—the near place-' since it is very near to Mecca. There is a consensus among the Islamic scholars that the Maghrib and Eshaa Prayers should be offered together in al-Mash'ar. It is derived from the Arabic root 'sh-a-r' meaning 'motto' or 'sign'. It is a place for those seeking God, for no sign of mammonism or egotism is there. Al-Mash'ar is a dark plain with pebbles on it, which has accommodated over one million pilgrims who have taken refuge in God and supplications under the dim light of stars of a mysterious sky. It is truly Mash'ar –sign-, for nothing but God-seeking mottos can be heard. Eyes cannot see anywhere but the echo of supplications soothes man's soul.

What a Blessed Place and what an Auspicious Night!

This night has no equal in man's life. It is dark but brighter than any day for men of heart. It is a night when the breeze of God's mercy is blowing and rain of His forgiveness is falling. It is a night when the doors of God's favor are opened to man. It is the even of the festival of sacrifice and the time of the King's public audience.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "If you can keep vigil tonight, do it, for it has been reported to us that the gates of heaven are not closed to the believers tonight. Allah says: 'I am Your Lord and you are My servants. You have paid my due. Hence, it is incumbent on Me to answer your prayer.' Therefore, He removes the sins of whomever He wishes and forgives whom He wills." [138]

Night, time of communion with God

Men of heart and insight know that night is opportune time for communion with God. Among blessings God has bestowed upon man is the blessing of night:

"*And We made the night to be a covering.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 78:10)

"*I swear by the night when it draws a veil.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 92:1)

Should the child-like playful man be left to himself, he is so much in love with the playing called the world and its ornaments that he will ruin himself. But like a loving mother who puts her playful child to sleep so that the child's energy will not go into waste, God puts a covering on man so that his eyes will not see all these toys and will be quieted down. Unfortunately, this playful man has turned nights into days with artificial lights and spends his precious life on love for the world making himself physically and mentally exhausted and

deprived of the aim of creation. In this world where most people are dead-hearted “and most of them do not understand,” [139] there are men of heart who are source of human dignity and living evidence of man’s superiority over animals, people who work during the day and keep vigil at night.

“During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous, and God-fearing. Fear of Allah has made them thin like arrows, if anyone looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, and he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern has made them mad. During the night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur’an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the care for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness for Paradise they pursue it avidly, and their spirit turns towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in from of them. And when they come across a verse which contains fear of Hell, they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend themselves from their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their palms, their knees, and their toes, and beseech Allah, the Sublime for their deliverance.” [140]

Imam Ali (a.s) longed for the nights to come so that he could have communion with God. During his supplication, he would always say: “Alas! The provision is little, the way is long, the journey is far and the goal is hard to reach.” [141]

Now it is night, the eve of feast of sacrifice in Al-Mash’ar Al-Haram

The eve of Eid ul-Adha is among four blessed nights along with the *Laylat ul-Qadr* –the Grand Night- for keeping vigil. Imam Ali (a.s)

says: “I like to see myself free during four nights to engage in prayer: the eve of month of Rajab, the eve of mid-Shaban, the eve of Eid ul-Fitr (feast of breaking the fast), and the even of Eid ul-Adha.” [142]

The pilgrims should reduce their sleep and food and instead engage in prayer, for the hours and days spent in the Hajj rites are very important. God introduces them as numbered and stated days:

“*And laud Allah during the numbered days.*" (The Holy Qur’an; 2:203)

“*And mention the name of Allah in stated days.*" (The Holy Qur’an; 22:28)

To sum it up, the pilgrims must take advantage of these transient heavenly hours during which they are God’s guests and He has declared His readiness to fulfill the requests of His guests: “*And your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you."* (The Holy Qur’an; 40:60)

If a beggar asks for something, it is not strange, but when a generous one is looking for a beggar, it is something unusual. A hadith says:

“When night comes to an end, Allah will say: Is there anyone calling upon Me so that I will answer him? Is there anyone asking Me so that I will fulfill his request? Is there anyone to ask forgiveness so that I will forgive him? Is there any repentant so that I will accept his repentance?” [143]

How can God possibly reject His servants’ calls and begging when

He Himself says:

"*And as for him who asks, do not chide (him).*" (The Holy Qur'an; 93:10)

As everything is prepared for our duaas to be answered, we first pray for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s), confess our wrongdoings, and supplicate in this way: "Now all that I have said rise up from my ignorance of my evil footsteps or forgetfulness of my blameworthy acts in the past, but in order that Thy heaven and those within it and Thy earth and those upon it may hear the remorse which I have professed to Thee and the repentance through which I have sought asylum with Thee. Then perhaps one of them, through Thy mercy, may show mercy upon my evil situation or be seized by tenderness for my evil state. There may come from him for my sake a supplication to which Thou givest ear more than to my supplication or an intercession surer with Thee than my intercession through which I may be delivered from Thy wrath and attain to Thy good pleasure." [144]

Reflect for an hour

Amid all acts of worship, reflecting on the philosophy of the Hajj rites, staying in al-Mash'ar al-Haram and the praiseworthy act of gathering pebbles and the mysterious acts in Mina as well as reflecting on all these acts is a superior act of worship. The Holy Prophet (saw) says:

"An hour of reflection is better than a year of worship." [145]

Imam Reza (a.s) says: "Worship is not an excess of praying and fasting, rather it is reflection on Allah's creation." [146]

Night in Al-Mash'ar Al-Haram and reflection

Night in al-Mash'ar al-Haram is opportune time for reflection. The sky there with the radiance of its stars creates a heavenly and spiritual state in man and takes to a world above other worlds.

The Philosophy of staying overnight in Al-Mash'ar

Let us reflect on the philosophy of staying overnight in al-Mash'ar, perhaps a door of God's mystery will be opened to us. We have come to al-Mash'ar to have full cognition of God and to renew our covenant with Him. Let us follow the duaa of Imam Hussein made on the day of Arafat:

"Is there any being more bright than You in whose light to find You? When have You been hidden to seek You under guidance? When have You been far away to turn to You through a sign? Let those eyes not seeing You watchful be blind and let the servant who has no love of You suffer losses and gain nothing." [147]

Al-Mash'ar al-Haram is the manifestation of God-seeking motto.

"*So, when you hasten on from Arafat, then remember Allah near the Holy Monument— Al-Mash'ar al-Haram.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:198)

Al-Mash'ar al-Haram is dark and nothing but God prevails it. The light of God's cognition has filled a pilgrim's heart so much so that everything is effected in its light:

"The greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts, and so, everything else appears small in their eyes." [148]

“The world of the mammonists is worthless than what trodden on.” [149]

Praiseworthiness of picking up pebbles in Al-Mash’ar

A pilgrim’s recommended act in al-Mash’ar is to pick up pebbles as many as seventy to take them to Mina to be thrown at the symbolic Satan. This act, yet not much pleasant, is a sign of man’s obedience to God’s command.

Al-Mash’Ar Al-Haram, A sign of Islamic Education

The educational school of Islam displays the world and its pleasures to the eyes of a Muslim as worthless as pebbles, for all crimes and corruptions in the world are the result of love of the world in a way the Holy Prophet (saw) says: “Love for this world is the source of all wrongdoings.” [150]

On the other hand, if a man is destitute, the desires which are inherent in his being and have not been properly satisfied will overflow making him rebel and disobedient especially if he lives in an environment with injustice and class differences. Imam Ali (a.s) says to his son Mohammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah: “O my son, I fear lest destitution overtakes you. So, you should seek Allah’s protection from it, because destitution is deficiency of religious belief, perplexity of intelligence, and it is conductive to hatred of obstinate people.” [151]

The Holy Prophet (saw) says: “Destitution is very close to the boundary of disbelief.” [152]

Today, material manifestations have become criteria of supremacy. If the ummah do not care about material manifestations, they will be undermined. In addition, since some Muslims do not enjoy sound

religious training and they are not people who "shall not fear the censure of any censurer (The Holy Qur'an; 5:44)," they should not only promote their moral and spiritual virtues, but they should have enough wealth to preserve their supremacy in the world and honor and prosperity in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an says: "*And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy.*" (8:60)

Imam Kazim (a.s) says: "O Shiites, you have lots of enemies looking for a pretext to attack and humiliate you. So, be prepared against them as much as you can." [153]

Halting Place VI: Mina, the place of sacrifice

Thanks to God, we have completed staying in al-Mash'ar al-Haram. We now move to Mina after sunrise of Eid ul-Adha, with a heart full of God's love and ready for offering our sacrifices. We are going to display in Mina what we have gained spiritually in Arafat and al-Mash'ar. Mina is the place of sacrifice. We intend to sacrifice the world for the satisfaction of God. Our wealth, position, reputation, and even our children have to be sacrificed for God. Mina displays the world people spiritual assets of perfect men who represent prophets. It is the manifestation of God's special favor to men of heart: "*Therefore, put off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Tuwa*." (The Holy Qur'an; 20:12)

You have been so honored that you are qualified to stand before God! Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "When people arrive in Mina, a herald will call out: 'O Mina, your dwellers have come! Open your arms and fill your pools with water!' Another herald will call out: 'If you know before Whom you have come, you will gain certitude about forgiveness and compensation of what you have spent." [154]

This is certainly a reference to the Qur'anic Verse: "*Whatever thing you spend, He exceeds it in reward.*" (34:39)

Although Mina is no more than a small valley, it extraordinarily accommodates a crowd several times its capacity and the abundance of food, welfare, and comfort in this place comes from invisible source. In this relation, Ibn Abbas says: Mina is extended for its dwellers in the same way that a mother's womb is extended for the fetus. [155]

Ramy Al-Jamarat in Mina and its philosophy

One of the obligatory acts of Hajj in Mina is Ramy al-Jamarat or casting stones on columns named al-Jamarat al-Uola (First column), al-Jamarat al-Wusta Second column), and Jamarat al-Aqaba symbolizing Satan. On Eid ul-Adha, a pilgrim is duty-bound to perform the Ramy of Jamarat al-Aqaba and perform the all three the next two days.

According to a hadith, when Adam (a.s), carrying out God's order, accompanied by Archangel Gabriel performed the Hajj rites and left Mina for the House, Satan appeared to him in the site of al-Jamara three times trying to prevent him from performing his duty with temptations. However, Adam with a hint from Gabriel by throwing seven pebbles at Satan in three sites, drove him away. Hence, this act became a tradition for the descendants of Adam. According to other hadiths, this happened to Prophet Ibrahim (a.s).

Ali ibn Jaafar asked his elder brother, Imam Kazim (a.s) about the philosophy of the Ramy al-Jamarat. The Imam answered: "Since the cursed Satan appeared to Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) in the site of al-

Jamarat and Ibrahim (a.s) threw stone at him, this act became tradition.” [156]

It is also said that al-Jamarat is the site of stoning the death of three traitors who had colluded with the enemy of their own people.

Another version is that in the year of the birth of the Holy Prophet (saw) a great army from Yemen headed by Abraha left for Mecca to demolish the House of God. Three Makkans secretly colluded with them by giving facilities. However, the enemy failed and was punished and destroyed through birds that threw stones on them. The three traitors were stoned to death in the present site of al-Jamarat on charge of treason. This act was later on put among the Hajj rites as expression of hatred towards traitors. Therefore, Mina can be a sign of a scene of battle against the enemies of the religion of God and the columns symbols of atheists standing on the way of the ummah. Pebbles can be symbols of worldly riches thrown away for the sake of God. Pilgrims practice these symbolic and spiritual acts to ensure their victory, for God’s promise is truthful:

“O you who believe, if you help the cause of Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet. (The Holy Qur’an; 47:7)”

It is recommended to put each pebble on the middle finger and throw it to al-Jamarat with the head of the forefinger. This act implies that if Muslims have power of faith, unity, patience, and firmness for God’s sake, the enemies will become so weak and humiliated that they will be defeated with a hint.

“*And if those who disbelieve fight with you, they would certainly turn (their) backs, and then they would not find any protector or a*

helper.” (The Holy Qur’an; 48:22)

“*And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 3:139)

Offering animal sacrifice in Mina and its philosophy

Another obligatory act in Mina following Ramy Jamarat al-Aqaba on Eid ul-Adha is sacrifice of an animal (camel, cow, or sheep) free from any defect and not thin. It is called ‘Qurban –offering-’, because this act of worship is aimed at getting close to God. Therefore, ‘qurban’ is any good deed by which man seeks God’s mercy. Since sacrifices are offered in the early hours of the day, it is also called Eid ul-Adha, and the animal sacrificed is called ‘dhahiyya’. Sacrifice is a symbol of devotion and offering one’s life in the way of the Beloved and the maximum degree of submission to God. Imam Ali read the following duaa upon offering the sacrifice:

“In the Name of Allah. I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists. Surely, my prayers, my sacrifice, my life, and my death belong to Allah the Lord of the worlds. O Allah, whatever I have comes from and is for You.” [157]

The offering of animal sacrifice on Eid ul-Adha enlivens the memory of Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismaeel (a.s). The father says, “O my son, surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you. (The Holy Qur’an; 37:102)” The young son, too, without having any fear, says, “*O my father, do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me one of the patient ones.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 37:102)

This is the utmost degree of devotion, which is worthy of God's saying, "*And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 37:107)

It was so destined that this great act of devotion to become part of the Hajj rites and to be repeated every year in the Hajj seasons. Prophet Ibrahim's act of devotion became source of pride for human beings before the angels who had said to God: "*Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:30)

The angels should know that among the same human beings there are those whose devotion is to the extent that God praises: "*So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead. And We called out to him saying: O Ibrahim! You have indeed shown the truth of the vision.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 37:103-5)

Therefore, Eid ul-Adha is the feast to celebrate the dignity of human beings, a day when man exchanged little provision of this world for the gardens wherein lasing blessings shall be his.

Paying homage to the master of Martyrs (a.s)

It is unfair not to mention the name of the great leader of the devotees, the endeared grandson of the Holy Prophet (saw), the light of the eyes of Imam Ali (a.s), the beloved of Fatima (a.s), and the master of martyrs; Imam Hussein (a.s) here. If Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) offered one sacrifice in Mina and the sacrifice was ransomed, Imam Hussein (a.s) offered seventy-two sacrifices in Karbala on a single day and none of them was ransomed. Imam Hussein (a.s) offered to God his friends and endeared ones including nursing infants and elderly men, beheaded and dismembered. Holding his

blood-soaked swaddled infant on his arms and sprinkling towards the sky, the blood gushing from the throat of his nursing infant, the Imam said: “What alleviates all that which I am suffering is their being under Allah’s sight.”

Then we should salute Imam Hussein (a.s) by saying: “Peace be on you, O Abu-Abdullah, and on those souls who came to your camp to put themselves at your disposal. So fat I am alive and the days and nights follow each other, I invoke Allah to send blessings on you for ever and ever.” [158]

Islam has two official feasts

There are two historic days in Islam called ‘Eids – feasts-’ celebrated by Muslim. One is Eid ul-Fitr marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a month during which Muslims practice self-restraint and abstention from wrongdoing. They engage in spiritual state and nightly supplications.

“*O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil)*.” (The Holy Qur’an; 2: 138)

The other feast is Eid ul-Adha, which is held following performance of the Hajj rites, stay in Arafat, cognition of God, then the overnight stay in al-Mash’ar, detachment from the world, and annihilation in God’s love. On these two occasions, Muslims are duty-bound to get together, and by performing the Eid Prayer and delivering speeches displays the heavenly glory of Islam and creates awe in the hearts of the atheists.

Social aspect of sacrifice in Mina

By discussing the socio-mental philosophy of sacrifice we have answered the questions posed by certain people who would say: Is it not better for pilgrims to offer their sacrifices at home and give to the poor and the neighbors when they return from Mecca instead of letting all the sacrifices go waste and suffer sunburn in Mina? Or is it not better for pilgrims to assign a deputy at home to sacrifice the animal on their behalf and have the flesh distributed among the poor?

These questions arise either from lack of knowledge about the sublime goal of this heavenly commandment or prejudice aimed at undermining the Hajj rites. We should note that the socio-mental aspects of the Hajj rites are extremely important. Staying in Arafat, al-Mash'ar, and Mina, Ramy al-Jamarat, performing the Eid Prayer, and delivering sermons are aimed to gather Muslims in a single place and time so as to display the glory of ummah to the world people and to make the oppressors and colonialists shaky with Muslims' ideological unity.

Drawing the attentions of Muslims to the vital role of the Hajj rites in restoring the entity of the ummah, their dignity and independence, the Holy Qur'an says:

"*O you who believe! Do not violate the signs appointed by Allah nor the sacred month, nor interfere with the offerings, nor the sacrificial animals with garlands, nor those going to the sacred house seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord; and when you are free from the obligations of the pilgrimage, then hunt, and let not hatred of a people-- because they hindered you from the Sacred Masjid-- incite you to exceed the limits, and help one another in goodness and*

piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression; and be careful of your duty to Allah; surely Allah is severe in requiting evil." (5:2)

According to the Holy Qur'an, offering sacrifice is as important as the Ka'aba: "*Allah has made the Ka'aba, the sacred house, maintenance for the people, and the sacred month and the offerings and the sacrificial animals with garlands.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 5:97)

That is to say, in the same way that the Ka'aba serves as factor to bring Muslims together until the Day of Judgment, offering sacrifice too is an inviolable tradition, which must exist until the Day of Judgment to show not only the spirit of submission to God but also to display the wrath of Muslim nations against the enemies of Islam. The Ka'aba represents love and compassion and sacrifice depicts wrath as stipulated by the Holy Qur'an: "*Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves."* (48:29)

A living religion needs both mosque and sacrifice

The life-giving religion of Islam emphasizes both worship and sacrifice. Offering one's life in the way of the religion can safeguard its survival. A true Muslim, while being man of prayer, is man of fighting against the enemies of God. In the same way that God has made the Ka'aba a place of security, "*(And when) We made the House a pilgrimage for men and a (place of) security.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 2:125). He had made sacrifice a source of blessing for human beings, "*And (as for) the camels, We have made them of the signs of the religion of Allah for you; for you therein is much good.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 22:36) God has mentioned camels because they are the most expensive among the animals offered for sacrifice

implying that we should sacrifice the dearest thing for the sake of God.

Sacrifice, existed among former nations

The Holy Qur'an shows that the Ka'aba was the first place of worship in the world before the advent of Islam: "*Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bekka, blessed and guidance for the nations.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 3:96)

Nevertheless, the question of sacrifice does not solely belong to Islam; rather former nations too were duty-bound to discharge this divine order:

"*And to every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they may mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds*." (The Holy Qur'an; 22:34)

The offering of sacrifice by sons of Adam, the first kind of itself is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "*And relate to them the story of the two sons of Adam with truth when they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other."* (5:27)

To sum it up, in the same way that Islam emphasizes the value of the congregation in Mecca and the tight ranks of Muslim worshippers in prayer, "*you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure*", (The Holy Qur'an; 48:29), it stresses sacrifice as symbol of courage, freedom, and fighting in defence of truth. Therefore, Eid ul-Adha (feast of sacrifice) in Mina represents both the spirit of devotion and submission of the Muslim nations to God and dazzles the eyes of

the atheists before faith, unity, resolution, and self-sacrifice of Muslims.

Since God's commandments are poly-dimensional, in the study of the Islamic precepts certain aspects must be ignored while other aspects and advisability must be taken into consideration. For instance, the Holy Qur'an expressly makes ensuring the social life conditional upon execution of murderers and the carrying out of law of retribution, "*And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation, O men of understanding.*" (2:179), or the Qur'anic ruling on an adulterer, "*(As for) the fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you in the matter of obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the last day, and let a party of believers witness their chastisement.*" (24:2), we see that pity for a fornicator has been prohibited, for it is tantamount to disbelief in Allah and the Day of Judgment. The reason a party of believers should witness the chastisement of the committers of fornication is to set an example for others and to ensure the chastity and purity of the society. The Holy Qur'an regards the dignity and soundness of the society above those of individuals.

Challenging the Qur'anic Verse, "*And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands*" (5:38), a biased person asked, "How is it that a hand the worth of which (blood money) is five hundred mitigals of gold has to be cut off for a stolen object worth quarter a dinar?" A witty scholar responded, "Honesty has made those hands worthy while theft and dishonesty have made the same hands worthless."

We should comprehend the philosophy of God's commandment. In

the above-mentioned ruling, too, the interests of individuals have been sacrificed for those of society so that people will live in sound society.

The spiritual philosophy of offering sacrifice

A believer who, due to staying in Arafat and al-Mash'ar, has come to the position of fully getting to know God and has undermined his carnal desires will not naturally hesitate to sacrifice whatever exists on his way in order to get close to his Beloved even if that being is his endeared son, life, and desires. Nevertheless, the Beloved, out of kindness and in consideration of His servant's weakness, is content with the sacrifice of an animal and accepts it as symbol of self-sacrifice in His way provided that the servant, by sacrificing this animal, sacrifices his bestial inclinations such as greed, jealousy, love of position and fame, mischief, pessimism, and other vices, saying with firmness:

"*Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth*." (The Holy Qur'an; 6:79)

While doing this, he should remember the Qur'anic Verse: "*There does not reach Allah their flesh nor their blood, but to Him is acceptable the guarding (against evil) on your part.*" (22:37)

God truly seeks His servant's piety and this virtue cannot be obtained save by killing carnal desires and Satanic temptations.

"*And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires, 41. Then surely the garden-- that is the abode.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 79:40-1)

"*And the garden shall be brought near for those who guard against evil.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 26:90)

Imam Sajjad (a.s) posed the following questions to a man who had just returned from Mecca on the philosophy of Hajj:

"When offering sacrifice, did you intend to sacrifice greed by restoring to piety? Did you pay attention to the fact that you were following Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) who took his endeared son to the sacrifice place for Allah's satisfaction?" [159]

Describing the pious, Imam Ali (a.s) says: "… His desires deed and his anger suppressed. Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him in not to be feared." [160]

The same people, on the Day of Judgment when only the pure heart counts, will be honored by God.

"*The day on which property will not avail, nor sons except him who comes to Allah with a heart free from evil.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 26:88-9)

Actually, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) was not asked to sacrifice his son, but to have a pure heart:

"*And most surely Ibrahim followed his way when he came to his Lord with a free heart*." (The Holy Qur'an; 37:83-4)

Since sacrificing an animal indicates spiritual state and free heart, it has become an act of worship among the Hajj rites:
"*That (shall be so); and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this*

surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts." (The Holy Qur'an; 22:32)

Economic profits in sacrifice

Everyone familiar with the Islamic precepts knows well that charity and helping the poor are indisputable duties of Muslims who have to allocate part of their wealth to special classes of people under Khums (one-fifth levy) and zakat (religious tax on such items as wheat, barley, raisin, etc.) In addition to obligatory charity in Islam, there are other recommended rules for helping the poor aimed at creating love among people form different classes. Islam's social programs automatically bring the rich and the poor close to each other. Friday and congregational Prayers in Hajj and everyday life bring the rich and the poor together side by side and in a single rank. Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha are two occasions on which Muslims perform both congregational Prayer and pay alms. On Eid ul-Fitr, every Muslim is duty-bound to pay 'fitriyah' as much as three kilos of food prevailing in the city to the needy. On Eid ul-Adha, too, it is obligatory on those in Mina and recommended for those in other countries to sacrifice an animal and give its meat to the poor. The Holy Qur'an says: "*He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself, and magnifies the name of his Lord and prays*." (The Holy Qur'an; 87:14-5)

In this Verse, purification of wealth precedes prayer, though purification also implies cleansing oneself of the filth of worldly attachments. We should note that prayer consolidates man's relation with God and zakat creates love among individuals of society. Both are necessary for the happy life of society.

Offering sacrifice has a double aim—to get close to God and to

receive His mercy, and secondly by distributing meat among the poor, one can win hearts of the needy and be worthy of their duaa.

How to use the meat of a sacrificed animal according to the Holy Qur'an and traditions

"*And (as for) the camels, We have made them of the signs of the religion of Allah for you; for you therein is much good; therefore mention the name of Allah on them as they stand in a row, then when they fall down eat of them and feed the poor man who is contented and the beggar; thus have We made them subservient to you, that you may be grateful.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 22:36)

"*Then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 22:28)

Abu-Sabbah Kanani says: I asked the opinion of Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the meat of sacrifice animal, he (a.s) said: "Imam Sajjad and Imam Baqir (a.s) used to give a third of it to neighbors, another third to beggars, and the remaining third was for the family members."

It is therefore incumbent upon the heads of the Islamic nations to create well-equipped organizations for distributing the meat of sacrificed animals among the needy on an international level, by getting permission from the religious authorities in order to realize both the Qur'anic ruling and to display to the world people an example of the sublime Islamic teachings.

Mohammad ibn Muslim says: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) whether it is permissible to take the meat of the sacrificed animals out of Mina. He (a.s) answered: "Formerly, people of Mecca were in need for them, but today because of too many pilgrims and sacrifices, their being taken out of Mina is no problem." [161]

Under the present circumstances and due to lack of well-equipped organizations, part of the sacrificed animals is unfortunately buried. Nevertheless, this loss has to be tolerated, for the sublime goal of presenting the socio-political aspect of Hajj will be ensured. That is to say, the financial aspect of the event has to be sacrificed for its socio-political aspect.

Halq and Taqsir in Mina and the philosophy

Following the completion of sacrifice, a pilgrim's duty is Halq and Taqsir. Halq means to shave one's head, and Taqsir is to shorten the nail or hair. Women must clip their nails and cut some locks of their hair while men have the choice to shave their heads or shorten. According to certain religious decrees, Halq is obligatory for men. The Qur'anic Verse on this religious duty is, "*Then let them accomplish their needful acts of shaving and cleansing.*" (22:29)

Imam Reza says: "The Arabic word 'tafath –mentioned in the Holy Qur'an-' means to clip the nails, to remove dirt, and to come out of the state of Ihram." [162]

Evidently, this is the surface meaning, but the in-depth meaning is purification of soul from filth of vices.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: "By shaving your head, remove all inward and outward flaws." [163]

Imam Sajjad (a.s) posed the following questions to a man who had returned from Mecca: "Did you have the intention to cleanse yourself from all pollutions and violations of rights of people and do without wrongdoings as if you were born of your mother when shaving your

head in Mina?” [164]

According to other hadiths, the word ‘tafath’ means to meet the Imam.

Thareeh asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the meaning of the above-mentioned Qur’anic Verse to which the Imam said: “’tafath’ means to meet the Imam.” [165]

By meeting Imam Mahdi (a.s), darkness of ignorance turns into light of knowledge, virtues replace vices, and an inner purification comes about. About such people the Holy Qur’an says: “*(As for) those who believe and do good, a good final state shall be theirs and a goodly return.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 13:29)

“*Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 16:97)

Hence, the Imam (a.s) drew people’s attention to their duties by saying: “Begin your Hajj from Mecca and complete it with our visitation.” [166]

By visitation, it is meant to renew one’s pledge with the Imam and to follow him. Failing to feel the presence of the Imam, they will look like a flock without shepherd, dispersed and exposed to wolves’ attack. Hence, the only benefit to Halq and Taqsir in Mina is a physical purification and nothing more. Even their Eid will lost its true meaning and the sorrows of men of understanding will increase. In this relation, Abdullah ibn Dinar quotes Imam Baqir (a.s) as saying: “There is no single Eid ul-Fitr or Eid ul-Adha in which Muslims do not

renew their sorrows for the household of the Holy Prophet —the Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s)… because they see their rights in the hands of others.” [167]

On the Eid days when Muslims congregate, the Imam (a.s) as an ‘axis’ round whom all should turn must be present. The worshippers must perform prayer under his leadership, sermons have to be delivered, and the boundaries of the religion have to be defended by him. Nevertheless, regrettably, they miss the Imam in all these positions. To whatever direction they go, they do not see any sign of their guardian. When they go for Ramy al-Jamarat, they do not have a commander; when they go to the place of sacrifice, they have no leader; when they perform Halq and Taqsir, there is no sign of the true Reformer and Purifier. The Imam, too, is sad about the disorderly situation of his followers. The Shiite Muslims who miss their master start lamenting. It is for this reason that one of the recommended duties or Shiite Muslims on Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha, Eid ul-Ghadir, and Fridays is to read Duaa an-Nudba. ‘Nudba’ means lamenting in separation from an endeared one, relating a beloved’s description, and shedding tears for his absence. Hence, as long as the Shiites are separate from their Imam, they keep on lamenting especially on the said occasions when their sorrows are renewed. A part of Duaa un-Nudba says:

For the purified ones of the progeny of Mohammad and Ali (may peace be upon both of them and their progeny); the bewailers should cry and the wailers should wail. And for their likes tears should be shed and clamorers should clamor and mourners should mourn in a heart-rending manner: where is Hassan? Where is Hussein? Where are the children of Hussein— the whole righteous and whole truthful? Where is the path after the path of

righteousness? Where are the virtuous people after virtuous people? Where are the rising suns? Where are the luminous moons? Where are the emblems of faith and basis of knowledge? Where is Baqiyyatullah that the world cannot be devoid from the presence of guided progeny?"

The Eid of Shiite Muslims will come a day when they see on their heads the shade of the Imam (a.s) who will hoist the banner of monotheism, will put the world on the path of God under the light of his guidance, and will fill the world with security.

"O Allah, show me that illustrious countenance, and that illuminated forehead, enlighten my eyes with his visit, hasten his reappearance, facilitate his exit, widen his path, take me on his path, make his influence pervasive, and support him." [168]

Summary

Both Halq and Taqsir in Mina have hygienic as well as spiritual benefits, a symbol of moral purification from arrogance, jealousy, avarice, and egotism. They have social implications; that is, the meeting of the ummah with their Imam and leader. Unity is the outcome of such meeting, which in its turn leads to the removal of vices and corruption from the society.

Staying overnight in Mina

Staying overnight in Mina is obligatory upon pilgrims. Staying in Mina on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Dhu'l-Hijja is also obligatory upon those pilgrims who, in the state of Ihram, have not abstained from hunting or having intercourse with women and for those who have delayed their departure from Mina in the afternoon of the 12th of Dhu'l-Hijja until night. During Tashriq period—the three days following Eid ul-Adha, Ramy ul-Jamarat is obligatory. This topic has

been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "*And laud Allah during the numbered days; then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no blame on him and whoever remains behind, there is no blame on him, this is for him who guards against evil.*" (2:203)

Imam Sadiq (a.s) is quoted as saying that the 'numbered days' are the same as Tashriq period. During these days, pilgrims who have performed the major parts of the Hajj acts have more free time for becoming familiar with Muslims from other countries.

Understanding among the ummah in Mina

One of the important duties of pilgrims in Mina is to create understanding with brethren in faith from other Islamic sects and to remove any misunderstanding, which has been created among Muslims as a result of negative propaganda by the aliens.

"*They demolished their houses with their own hands.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 58:2)

The enemy is looking for every chance to create division among Muslims and by using the policy of 'divide to rule' strengthens its own power. The enemy knows that a nation that says 'there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is His Messenger', that is neither attracted by the ornaments of the world nor fears death (martyrdom), that, according to the Holy Qur'an, is "ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall," [169] will foil the enemy's plot with its individuals' unity and solidarity.

Unfortunately, one billion Muslims believing in One God, one prophet, one Book, and Kiblah and standing side by side in congregational prayer and Hajj ranks are poled apart. This is the

same danger the Holy Prophet (saw) expressed in his Farewell Hajj: “O Muslims, do not convert to atheism after me by killing each other, for I have left with you two things—if you resort to them you will never go astray; the Book of Allah and my household. Have I conveyed? O Allah, be the witness.” [170]

To sum it up, Islam has set the grounds for gathering of Muslims under various situations so as to bring their hearts together in a bid to foil the aliens’ conspiracies. Staying in Mina makes Muslims from all over the world get to know one another, to feel that they are brethren:

“*And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the favor of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favor you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it, thus does Allah make clear to you His communications that you may follow the right way.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 3:103)

“*…And united their hearts; had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; surely He is Mighty, Wise.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 8:63)

Perhaps, the philosophy of staying overnight in Mina and engaging in Ramy al-Jamarat during the day is that the hands of the Islamic states should consult and exchange views and struggle against the agents of Satan.

Nights in Mina and communion with God

Another recommended act in Mina is communion with God in the heart of nights and under the sky of Mina, a chance that might rarely

occur in one’s lifetime. Here is the warning of Imam Ali (a.s): “O creatures of Allah, you should know now that you have to perform (good) acts, because (at present) your tongues are free, your bodies are healthy, your limbs have movement, the area of your coming is wide; before the loss of opportunity or the approach of death. Take death’s approach as an accomplished fact and do not think it will come hereafter.” [171]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) used to go to the cemetery at night saying: “O you who are in graves, how is it that I call you but you do not answer?”

Then the Imam (a.s) would say: “By Allah, there is a wall between them and answer making then unable to answer, I will be like them, too.”

Then, the Imam (a.s) would stand facing Kiblah and had communion with God until dawn. [172]

Here is another sermon of Imam Ali (a.s): “May Allah have mercy on you, provide yourselves for the journey because the call for departure has been announced. Regard your stay in the world as very short, and return (to Allah) with the best provision that is with you, because surely in front of you lies a valley, difficult to climb, and places of stay full of fear and dangers. You have to reach there and stay in them. And know that the eyes of death are approaching towards you. It is as though you are (already) in its talons and it has struck itself against you. Difficult affairs and distressing dangers have crushed you into it. You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourselves with the provision of Allah’s fear.” [173]

The Holy Qur'an, too, recommends night communion with God: "*They used to sleep but little in the night and in the morning they asked forgiveness.*" (51:17-8)

Therefore, pilgrims should rise up and have communion with God during these nights, which are replete with God's mercy. Mohammad ibn Sinan quotes Imam Reza (a.s) as saying: "The reason Mina [174] is called so is that in this place Angel Gabriel told Prophet Ibrahim: Desire what you wish from your Lord." [175]

Pilgrims should prepare themselves here to be given the permission to move towards God's House.

It is narrated that Imam Sadiq (a.s), when was asked about the philosophy of the pilgrims' staying in al-Mash'ar and Mina before visiting God's house, said: "This is because the Ka'aba is Allah's House, the Sacred Mosque His veil, and al-Mash'ar His gate. When pilgrims intend to visit Allah's House, they are ordered to stop outside in order to be given permission to enter. There is the second veil, which is Muzdalifah, and pilgrims have to stop there. Since Allah has witnessed their supplication, He orders them to offer sacrifice. When they offer their sacrifices and are purified from filth and sins, which are veils between them and Allah, they are ordered to visit His sacred House."

The Imam (a.s) also answered the one who asked why it is blameworthy to fast on days of Tashriq: "Since all pilgrims are Allah's guests and attend His feast, the guest should not fast in the House of the Host Who has invited him to His banquet." [176]

Kheif Mosque in Mina

One of the holy places in Mina is Kheif Mosque, which is said to be the worship place of the prophets (a.s) and the place of sacrifice of Ismaeel (a.s). Performing prayer, reciting the Holy Qur'an, and supplications are recommended in this place.

Halting Place VII: Visitation of The Ka'aba and kissing The Black Stone

Thanks to God, we have gone through the sixfold Halting places and in each a veil between us and God is removed, and by offering sacrifice and removing vices, we are purified both physically and spiritually to visit God's House and kiss the Black Stone. We leave Mina for the Sacred House to once again perform circumambulation, Sa'y between Safa and Marwa, which we had already done as umrah but this time as Tamattu'. We intend to attain the highest degree of human dignity by kissing and caressing the Black Stone, which is symbol of shaking hands of servitude with God and renewing the pledge of servitude.

Those pilgrims who, during their stay in Mina, have had time and come to Mecca for circumambulation, Sa'y and Tawaf un-Nissa, are now free, but those who have delayed their acts in Mecca, go for circumambulation and Sa'y after returning from Mina.

The Black Stone, God's Hand on the Earth

The Black Stone installed in the eastern corner of the Ka'aba—the start point of circumambulation is described by the Holy Prophet (saw) as God's Hand and shrine for all prophets and Imams throughout history.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (saw) as saying:

“Circumambulate the House and caress the Corner, for it is Allah’s right hand on the earth by which He shakes hand with His servants in the same way as a slave or seeker of refuge shake hands (with masters). The Corner also will testify for him who caress it of accomplishment of the duty.” [177]

The Black Stone is of Heavenly essence and God’s trustee among servants

Many questions have been made on the nature of the Black Stone, the reason it has been installed on the eastern corner of the Ka’aba, and the philosophy of kissing and caressing it. Sheikh Saduq, in Vol. 2 of *Ilal ush-Sharai’e*, and Faiz, in vol. 2 of *al-Wafi*, write that Bakr ibn Ayun reported that he asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the Black Stone, its position, and the reason why it is kissed. He (a.s) answered: “You have posed a difficult question out of curiosity. Now listen carefully to understand what I say, Allah willing. Do you know what the Black Stone was?” I answered, “No.” The Imam (a.s) said: “The Black Stone used to be an angel. When Allah took pledge from the angels (about the divinity of Allah, the Prophethood of Mohammad (saw), and the Imamate of Ali (a.s)) it was the first angel who believed and confessed to it. Hence, Allah made him a trustee of his people and entrusted to him the pledge He had taken from other creatures making them duty-bound to come to him every year and renew their allegiance. Then, Allah made that angel Adam’s friend to remind him of his pledge and to confess to it again until Adam abandoned what was a superior order and was expelled from Paradise. On the earth, Adam was wandering without having anyone as friend but when his repentance was accepted, Allah sent the same angel to him in the form of a white pearl. Adam rejoiced at seeing it but did not recognize it. Therefore, it turned into the former shape introducing himself to Adam and reminding him of his covenant. Recognizing him, Adam began to weep, kissed him, and

renewed his allegiance. Once again, Allah turned him into white pearl. Since then, Adam carried it on his shoulder respectfully and renewed his pledge every year until the Ka'aba was built and, on Allah's order, it was installed on the eastern corner of the House. It was the same place where Allah took pledge from the children of Adam and men's pledge was entrusted to that angel. It is from the same pillar that Archangel Gabriel will descend to Imam Mahdi (a.s) expressing his allegiance to him. It is also the same position on which Imam Mahdi will lean and speak. The reason Allah has entrusted the covenant to that angel is that when Allah asked the angels to confess of His divinity, Mohammad's Prophethood, and Ali's Imamate, a kind of worry was created in them due to the heavy task but not to that angel. No angel is equal to him in terms of love for Mohammad and his household. Allah chose him from among the angels and entrusted the creatures' covenant to him. On the Day of Judgment, this angel will witness with his eyes and tongue in favor of everyone who has come to this place, renewed his pledge, and has been faithful. As for kissing the Black Stone and behaving humbly there, they are aimed at renewing the pledge and allegiance with Allah. Do you not realize that when kissing the Black Stone, you say, I performed my duty and kept my promise so that you will testify to my faithfulness. By Allah, no one can give and keep this pledge save our followers. It is our followers who, when coming to the Black Stone, will be recognized and affirmed but others will be denied because they have not kept the pledge. Therefore, by Allah, the Black Stone will testify in your favor and against them for the breach of promise and disbelief. He is the Perfect proof of Allah on them. He will come in his former shape, with a tongue to speak and eyes to see. People know him. He will testify in favor of those who have been faithful and have renewed their pledge and testify against those who have denied him and breached the promise."

Note

Every fair-minded, by reflecting on Islam, the Holy Qur'an, and hadiths of the immaculate Imams (a.s) admits that the extraordinary and supernatural events in the lives of the prophets and saints cannot be denied nor can any individual believing in the Holy Qur'an have the least doubt about them. The Holy Qur'an, this heavenly living evidence testifies that the rod of Moses turned into a serpent, "*So he threw his rod, then lo! It was a clear serpent.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 7:107), and the fire became cool for Ibrahim (a.s), "*We said: O fire, be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim*." (The Holy Qur'an; 21:69), or Jesus' ability to bring the dead to life, "*That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord… and bring the dead to life.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 3:49)

Evidently, all these extraordinary events have taken place with God's permission. Therefore, if we are given certain hadiths about miracles in the lives of the prophets, Imams, or about the Ka'aba, the Black Stone, and the Standing-place of Ibrahim, and they are not contrary to indisputable Qur'anic principles, it would be unfair to have doubt about them, for all the miracles and extraordinary events which the Holy Qur'an has expressly confirmed are outside the logic of natural sciences.

We now acknowledge the truthfulness and heavenly nature of the Holy Qur'an, under its guidance, admit that beyond this material world there is a world full of mysteries and lights which we cannot see. The relation between the material and spiritual worlds is exactly the relation between body and soul. All phenomena of this world are defective examples of the original truths and realities of that world. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: "*There is not a thing but with us are the treasures of it; and We do not send it down but in a*

known measure.” (15:21)

This Qur’anic verse indicates that all things have, beyond this world, infinite existence but when coming to this world, they are limited to certain measure. About the Holy Qur’an itself, God says: “*Most surely, it is an honored Qur’an, in a book that is protected –hidden- none shall touch it save the purified ones.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 77:80)

This Qur’anic Verse considers a world beyond this one and a form beyond the tangible form, for the truth of the Holy Qur’an.

Elsewhere, the Holy Qur’an says: “*Nay, they reject that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge and the final sequel of it has not yet come to them.*” (10:39)

The day of sequel is on the Day of Judgment: “*Certainly, you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp.*” (50:22)

Many hadiths confirm the truthfulness of the Qur’anic Verses, the sequel, and face to which all beings return. One of these hadiths is related to the Holy Qur’an itself. Jaber quotes Imam Baqir (a.s) as saying: “On the Day of Judgment, the Holy Qur’an turning into the most handsome man will pass by Muslims. They will say: This man is ours. He then will pass by the prophets and they will say: He is ours. He then will pass by the angels. They will say: he is ours. Finally, he will stand before Allah saying: O Lord, I encouraged such and such person to fast on hot days while he was thirsty and encouraged him to keep vigil but I did not keep such and such person thirsty on hot days nor did I make him keep vigil. Then, Allah will say: Make the former one enter Paradise and settle them in

suitable houses. Then, the Holy Qur'an will move forward and those loving the Holy Qur'an will follow him, He will say to the believing man: Read and ascend. The believing man will read and ascend until he reaches his special station and will settle there." [178]

This hadith shows the sequel of the Holy Qur'an as the most handsome man whose glory and majesty impress even the angels and prophets. He is eventually missioned by God to make the believers settle in their heavenly houses.

All beings in the world have two features

Those having foresight believe that all beings have two features, one towards the world and the other towards the heaven. Their features, which are related to the world is quite and dead but their features, which are related to heaven is stormy and living. Superficial observers who see the worldly features cannot possibly accept that a rod can turn into a serpent, a tree or stone speak, a mountain gives birth of a camel, or the Black Stone turns into a seeing and speaking man who witnesses people's deeds both in the world and the Hereafter, and testify to their belief and disbelief. Hence, they deny all the miracles and extraordinary events. They do not know that the same dead land and dry wood behind their dead features have living features, which they will show when ordered by God the Everliving the Self-Subsistence: "*And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification*." (The Holy Qur'an; 17:44)

"*Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to Him you shall be brought back.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 36:83)

The two Qur'anic Verses show that the heavenly features of every being control its earthly features.

Summary

In view of what we have discussed so far it was made clear that all the traditions about the Ka'aba and the Black Stone are against common sense and are in line with indisputable Qur'anic precepts, and due to their frequent narration and their compatibility with the Qur'anic criteria of miracles and extraordinary events, their truthfulness has been confirmed by sources of revelation.

Kissing and caressing The Black Stone by causing inconvenience to others

Evidently, caressing the Black Stone during circumambulation is a recommended act provided that the site is not overcrowded. But if such an act causes inconvenience to the pilgrims it should be avoided and waving of hand to it is sufficient.

Seif Tammar narrated: I said to Imam Sadiq (a.s): "I went towards the Black Stone and found a huge crowd. I came across a Shiite Muslim and asked him about my duty. He said, 'You have no option but to caress the Black Stone.'" The Imam (a.s) said: "Caress the Black Stone if there is empty space otherwise greet it from afar." [179]

Imam Reza (a.s) was asked: Do pilgrims have to fight with one another over caressing the Black Stone when there is huge crowds?" The Imam (a.s) answered: "When it is such, wave hand to it." [180]

Avoid dropping pebbles round The Ka'aba

Some pilgrims in order to forget the rounds of circumambulation, drop small pebbles round the Ka'aba. Not only does this act make

the floor of the Sacred Mosque dirty but also it causes inconvenience to others. Hence, it should be avoided.

Take part in the congregational prayer and do not leave the Mosque

It is sometimes seen that some Shiite Muslims due to lack of knowledge of their religious orders and without understanding the sublime objective of Islam in holding this international congress of Muslims, leave the Mosque when hearing the call to prayer. Those who are preparing for the congregational prayer in the Mosque ask themselves the following questions: Who are these people? Do they not believe in prayer? If so, what are they doing here? Why have they come to Mecca and what is their relation with the Holy Prophet?

Hence, Shiite pilgrims must be careful not to do something disgraceful.

Ishaq ibn Ammar narrated that Imam Sadiq (a.s) asked him, ‘O Ishaq, do you pray with the Sunni Muslims in mosques?’ ‘Yes, I do,’ answered I. The Imam (a.s) then said: ‘Pray with them, for whoever prays with them in the first rank (of the congregational prayer) is like a soldier who fights in the way of Allah.’ [181]

Hammad ibn Uthman quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: “He who performs prayer with them (the other Muslim sects) in the first rank – of the Congregational Prayer- is as if he participates in a congregational prayer led by the Messenger of Allah (saw) in the first rank.” [182]

Shahham quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying: O Zeid, show good behavior towards them. Perform prayer in their mosques, visit their

patients, take part in their funerals, and assume the position of one who calls to prayer and leads the congregational prayer. If you do so, people will refer to you in good words, and since you are Jafarites –followers of Jafar-, people will praise Jafar for the good moral standards that he taught his companions. But if you neglect so, people will refer to you in bad manner and will not praise Jafar for his companions' bad manners. [183]

Do not miss the opportunity of performing circumambulation and prayer in the Sacred Mosque and reading the Holy Qur'an

You stay a few days and nights in Mecca between umrah and Tamattu' in the vicinity of God's House. It is excellent opportunity to acquire happiness of the Hereafter during this period. Therefore, we should take a provision for the Day of Judgment.

"*Nay! When the earth is made to crumble to pieces and your Lord comes and also the angels in ranks and hell are made to appear on that day. On that day shall man be mindful, and what shall being mindful then avail him? He shall say: O! Would that I had sent before for this my life!*" (The Holy Qur'an; 89:21-4)

"*What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?*" (The Holy Qur'an; 23:115)

What is impossible for the pilgrims is to perform in any place of the world and on any day or night and its loss will be regretted is the circumambulation of the Ka'aba, caressing the Black Stone, prayer in the standing-place of Ibrahim and the Hijr Ismaeel.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (saw) says: "Circumambulate the Ka'aba too much, for it is the least in the book of your deeds on the Day of

Judgment.” [184]

“Allah is proud of those who circumambulate the Ka’aba.” [185]

Imam Reza (a.s) says: “As long as one stays in Mecca, it is recommended to circumambulate as many as days of a year. If this is impossible, make it three hundred times, and if this is also impossible, make it as many as possible.”

The virtue of prayer in the Sacred Mosque

Imam Reza (a.s) quotes his honorable ancestors and Imam Baqir as saying: “One Rakat of prayer in the Sacred Mosque is better than a hundred thousand Rakat of prayer in other mosques.” [186]

The virtue of reading the whole Qur’an in Mecca

Imam Baqir (a.s) says: “Whoever reads the whole Qur’an in Mecca within a week, less or more, and finishes it on Friday, Allah will write for him as many rewards as Fridays in this world. If he reads the whole Qur’an on other days, the same rewards will be written for him.” [187]

Do not miss the Umrah Mufradah

In addition to circumambulating, offering prayers, and reciting the Holy Qur’an, one must not miss performing the umrah mufrada so long as he is in Mecca.

Ibn-Uzaina reports that he asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) some questions and the Imam himself wrote down the answers:

“I asked him about God’s saying, ‘*and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it*', (The Holy Qur’an; 3:97) and he

(a.s) answered, 'This indicates to both Hajj and umrah since they both are incumbent.' I also asked him about God's saying, '*And accomplish the pilgrimage (Hajj) and the visit(umrah) for Allah*,' (The Holy Qur'an; 2:196) and he (a.s) answered, 'This means that they both must be accomplished completely and that every act that is forbidden for the Muhrim to do is also forbidden to be done during periods of Hajj and Urmah.' I also asked him about God's saying, '*the day of the greater pilgrimage –Hajj-…*' (The Holy Qur'an; 9:3) and he (a.s) answered, 'the greater Hajj is halting in Arafat and throwing the pebbles, and the minor Hajj is the Umrah.'" [188]

To mention the parents, brethren, and neighbors during the performance of acts of Hajj is praiseworthy and recommended.

Ibn-Ammar narrates that he asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) whether it is acceptable to include his parents and brothers with his performance of Hajj though they all performed Hajj. The Imam (a.s) answered: "Include them with your Hajj, for Allah the Exalted will write to them and you the rewards of performance of Hajj and, additionally, you will exclusively obtain the reward of regarding your relatives. The rewards of prayers, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and manumission (of slaves) that are offered for the death reach them while they are in their graves." [189]

Notes:

[87] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.336 hadith 5

[88] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.337 hadith 8

[89] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.335 hadith 3

[90] See *Jami'us-Sa'aadat*; Vol. 2

[91] See *Jami'us-Sa'aadat*; Vol. 2 p.285

[92] See *Jami'us-Sa'aadat*; Vol. 2 p.339

[93] See *Jami'us-Sa'aadat*; Vol. 2 p. 340

[94] See *al-Mahajjat ul-Beidhaa*; vol. 5 p.169

[95] See *al-Mahajjat ul-Beidhaa*; vol. 5 p.170

[96] See *al-Mahajjatol Beizaa*; vol. 5

[97] See *al-Mahajjat ul-Beidhaa*; vol. 4 p.243

[98] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.206 hadith 6

[99] This is a statement of the Du'aa –supplication- of month of Rajab.

[100] See Qadi Saeed Qummi's *Asrar ul-Ibadat*, p. 230

[101] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.412 hadith 3

[102] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p. 240 hadith 4

[103] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p240 hadith 2

[104] Mas'aa is the place of Sa'y.

[105] See *Ilal ush-Shara'ie*; vol. 2 p.118 hadith 1

[106] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2

[107] This statement is quoted from Du'aa –the supplication of- Kumayl.

[108] See Ad-Deilami's *Irshad ul-Quloub*; hadith: Mi'raj

[109] This statement is part of Imam al-Hussein's Du'aa on the Day of Arafat; the ninth of Dhu'l-Hijja.

[110] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Section: Hajj p.42

[111] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Section: Hajj p.42

[112] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p. 262 hadith 38

[113] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Section: Hajj p.42

[114] See *Sharhu Nahjil-Balagha*; vol. 4 p.263 and *Oddat ud-Daee*; p.28

[115] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya,* Supplication 16

[116] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 2 p.466 hadith 3

[117] See *al-Muraqabaat*; the introduction p.6

[118] See *al-Muraqabaat*; the introduction p.6

[119] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya*

[120] Du'aa of Abu-Hamza Thamali

[121] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya*; 2nd Duaa

[122] Dervish is any member of an Islamic mystic fraternity.

[123] See *Kemal ud-Din*; p. 346 hadith 33

[124] See *Mahdi Mau'ood*; p. 750

[125] See Collection of *Waram*; vol. 2 p. 100 and *Oddatol Daee*; p. 122

[126] Du'aa al-Mashloul (Supplication of the Lame Man)

[127] A part of Du'aa *an-Nudba*

[128] A part of Du'aa *an-Nudba*

[129] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 2 p. 507 hadith 2

[130] See *Usoul al-Kafi*; vol. 2 p. 507 hadith 6 and *Oddatol Daee*; 136

[131] See *Oddatol Daee* p.136

[132] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya,* The whispered prayer of the hopeful

[133] Part of *Duaa of Imam Hussein on Day of Arafat*

[134] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p.258 hadith 24

[135] This statement is quoted from *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p. 258 hadith 24

[136] Eid ul-Adha —feast of sacrifice— is a festival marking the culmination of the annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca.

[137] See *Usoul al-Kafi*; vol. 2 p. 110 hadith 5

[138] See *al-Kafi*; Vol. 4 p. 469 hadith 1

[139] The Holy Qur'an; 5:103

[140] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 193: Qualities of the God-fearing

[141] See *Nahjul Balagha*; maxim 77

[142] See *al-Muraqabaat*; the introduction

[143] See Ad-Deilami's *Irshad ul-Quloub* chapter 13 p.92

[144] See *as-Sahifat al-Kamilat al-Sajjadiyya,* Supplication 31

[145] See *Jami'us-Sa'aadat*; Vol. 1 p 165

[146] See *Tuhaf ul-Uqoul* p. 325

[147] Part of Duaa of Imam Hussein (a.s) on Day of Arafat

[148] See *Nahjul Balagha*, sermon 184 Qualities of the God-fearing

[149] See *Rawdhat ul-Kafi*; p. 247 H.347

[150] See *Collection of Waraam*; vol. 1 p.128

[151] See *Nahjul Balagha,* p. 1228 saying 311

[152] See *Collection of Waraam*; vol. 1

[153] See *al-Fussoul ul-Muhimma*; chapter 41 p. 161

[154] See *al-Kafi*; vol. 4 p. 256 hadith 20

[155] See *Tareekh Mekka*; p. 179

[156] See *Ilal ush-Sharayie*; vol. 2 p. 122

[157] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 section: Hajj p. 169

[158] This statement is a part of *Ziyarat Ashuraa*

[159] See *al-Mustadrak*; vol. 2 p. 184 section 17 hadith 5

[160] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 193 –About the Pious-

[161] See *al-Kafi*; vol. 4 p. 500 hadith 7

[162] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Kitab al-Hajj

[163] See *Misbah ush-Shari'a*; chapter 21.

[164] See *Mustadrak ul-Wasaail*; vol. 2

[165] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Ziyarat

[166] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 Ziyarat

[167] See *Ilal ush-Shara'ie*; vol. 2

[168] This statement is a part of Duaa al-Ahd

[169] The Holy Qur'an; 61:4

[170] See *Tuhaf al-Uqoul*; p. 30

[171] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 187

[172] See *Collection of Waraam*; vol. 1 p.284

[173] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 195

[174] The Arabic 'mina' is very close to the Arabic 'muna' which means 'wish'.

[175] See *Ilal ush-Sharai'e*; vol. 2 p. 120

[176] See *Ilal ush-Shara'ie*; vol. 2 p.128

[177] See *Ilal ush-Shara'ie*; vol. 2 p. 109 hadith 3

[178] See *Ussoul al-Kafi*; vol. 2 p. 601 hadith 11

[179] See *al-Kafi*; vol. 4 p. 405 hadith 3

[180] *Ibid*

[181]See *Al-Wafi*; vol. 2

[182] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 p.182

[183] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 p.182

[184] See *al-Mustadrak*; vol. 2 p. 147

[185] See *al-Mustadrak*; vol. 2 p. 147

[186] See *Thawab ul-Aamal*; p. 49

[187] See *Thawab ul-Aamal*; p. 50

[188] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 section: Hajj p. 47

[189] See *al-Wafi*; vol. 2 section: Hajj p. 57

Conclusion of the Hajj Rites

"*So when you have performed your devotions, then laud Allah as you lauded your fathers, rather a greater lauding.*" The Holy Qur'an; 2:200)

We have already discussed how the physical acts of the Hajj rites represent the spiritual stations of perfect human beings who attain affinity with God and live a prosperous life in both this world and the Hereafter. Now that we have completed the Hajj rites, we should see whether we have gone through a spiritual change or not.

People of the pre-islamic era performed hajj, too

Reading history, we find out that the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era performed Hajj as follows: During the Hajj season, after performing the usual rites and sacrificing animal, gathered in Mina, started vying with each other in glory and boasted of having such and such fathers and ancestors. They were so business-minded that even in the gatherings held in Arafat and Mina under the name of Hajj, they were thinking of increasing their profits, boasting their business and living an aristocratic life. What they lacked and what was meaningless of them was moral virtues and spiritual perfection. They were an example of a people described by the Holy Qur'an:

"*Say: Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in their deeds? These are they whose labor is lost in this world's life and they think that they are well versed in skill of the work of hands.*" (18:103-4)

They were thinking only of the worldly wealth and ignored the spiritual aspect of Hajj. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: "*But there are some people who say, Our Lord! Give us in the world, and they shall have no resting place... And there are some among them*

who say: Our Lord! Grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the fire. They shall have (their) portion of what they have earned." (2:201-2)

O Pilgrims of The Sacred House

O pilgrims of the Sacred House, come to yourselves, for the heavenly call of the Holy Qur'an echoes in the ears of our soul: O Couriers of God's House who have taken off your worldly garment and have given positive response to your Lord! O you who stay in Arafat, al-Mash'ar, and Mina! O you who stone Satan to death! O you who sacrifice the animal of concupiscence! O you who remove vices by shaving your head and clipping your nail! O you who renew your pledge with God by caressing the Black Stone! Do not forget your covenant and remember God a great deal! Remember the following Qur'anic Verse throughout your life:

"*The pilgrimage is (performed in) the well-known months; so whoever determines the performance of the pilgrimage therein, there shall be no intercourse nor fornication nor quarrelling amongst one another; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the provision is the guarding of oneself, and be careful (of your duty) to Me, O men of understanding.*" (2:197)

Sermon of Man of Letter

O groups of pilgrims who come from everywhere! Are you mindful of what you will face and to whom you will turn? Do you understand whose guest you will be and what acts you will do? Do you think Hajj is to choose means of transportation, traverse roads, and prepare for journeys? Do you think the Hajj rites mean only to take off your clothes, get slim, be separate from your children and wife, and be away from home? No, by God, it is not. Rather Hajj means to avoid wrongdoings before taking the riding animal and pure intention of

pilgrimage for mere obedience to God, rectify one's affairs with people before preparing for journey. By One Who decided the Hajj rites for people and Who guided wayfarers in murky nights, ritual washing of body with a few pails of water does not acquit you from purifying your soul. Making your body bare of garment and shoes does not necessarily prepare you for getting into the state of Ihram. What is the benefit of putting on Ihram for one who is engaged in illegal business? What benefit can he get with Taqsir when he violates people's rights? Except the knowledgeable, none may become prosperous in Arafat? What does he have to do with Kheif Mosque when he desires for wronging others? He cannot attend the standing-place of Ibrahim unless he is firm in belief. He who is deviated from the right path will not benefit by Hajj. Therefore, God may have mercy upon a man who purifies himself before Sa'y in Safa, and reaches the position of contentment before he accomplishes the rites, and removes the veil of guile from his soul before taking off his clothes, shoes and hat, and does good deeds before getting benefit from Arafat. [190]

Imam Sajjad's comprehensive reference to the Secrets of Hajj

Imam Zayn ul-Abidin –Sajjad- (a.s) was received by Shibli when he was back from Hajj and the following dialogue occurred between them:

The Imam: Did you perform Hajj, Shibli?

Shibli: Yes, son of Allah's Messenger, I did.

The Imam: You stopped at Miqat, put off your sewn clothes, and washed yourself, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you stopped at Miqat, did you intend to put off the garment of disobedience (to God) and put on a garment of obedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you put off your sewn clothes, did you intend to get rid of ostentation, hypocrisy, and intrusion in suspicious matters?

Shibli: No, I did not?

The Imam: As you washed yourself, did you intend to wash yourself from sins and offenses?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really stop at Miqat, put off your sewn cloths, and wash yourself. You washed yourself thoroughly, entered the state of Ihram, and intended to perform Hajj, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you washed yourself thoroughly, entered the state of Ihram, and intended to perform Hajj, did you intend to wash yourself thoroughly with pure repentance to Allah?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you entered the state of Ihram, did you intend to abstain from every matter that Allah deems unlawful?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you intended to perform Hajj, did you intend to get rid of any pledge that you took with anyone other than Allah?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not wash yourself thoroughly, enter the state of Ihram, or intend to perform Hajj. Did you enter Miqat, offer the two-Rakat prayer of Ihram, and say Labbayk (Talbiya)?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you entered Miqat, did you intend to meet all the qualifications of the visitation of the Sacred House of Allah?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you offered the two-Rakat prayer, did you intend to seek nearness to Allah through the best deeds such as prayers and the deeds by which servants of Allah can obtain His rewards?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you said Labbayk, did you intend to utter any statement of obedience to Allah and shut your mouth against any statement of disobedience to Him?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not enter Miqat, offer the two-Rakat prayer of Ihram, or say Labbayk. You entered the Sacred Precinct, saw the Ka'aba, and offered prayers there, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you entered the Sacred Precinct, did you intend to abstain from backbiting any individual of Islam?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you arrived in Mecca, did you intend to direct towards Allah and no one else?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really enter the Sacred Precinct, see the Ka'aba, or offer prayers. You circumambulated the Holy House, touched the corners, and performed the Sa'y, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you performed the Sa'y, did you intend to seek refuge of Allah (from the trickeries of Satan and evil temptations) and that He, the Knower of the unseen, knew this from you?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really circumambulate the Holy

House, touch its corner, or perform the Sa'y. You caressed the Black Stone, stopped at the standing-place of Ibrahim (a.s), and offered a two-Rakat prayer there, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam (a.s) then cried so loudly and said:

To caress the Black Stone is to shake hands with Allah. Look, poor man, do not ever waste the reward for the thing that is greatly sacred and do not breach your caressing by acts of violation (of God's instructions) and seizure of illegal things, just like the sinful.

As you stopped at the standing-place of Ibrahim (a.s), did you intend to stop at every act of obedience (to God) and leave every act of disobedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you offered the two-Rakat prayer, did you intend to offer the same prayer that was offered by Ibrahim (a.s) and to disappoint Satan?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really caress the Black Stone, stop at the standing-place of Ibrahim (a.s), or offer the two-Rakat prayer there. You came near to Well Zamzam and drank from its water, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you did, did you intend to come near to acts of obedience (to God) and cast your sight down acts of disobedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you neither really came near that well nor did you drink from its water. You roamed, walked, and frequented to Mount Safa and Mount Marwa, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you did, did you intend to be between hope and fear (of God)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really roam, walk, or frequent between Safa and Marwa. You then left for Mina, [191] did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: Did you intend to save people from your tongue (words), heart (ill intention), and hand (deeds)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really leave for Mecca. You halted in Arafat, mounted Jabal al-Rahma (Mount Mercy), recognized Nemira Valley, and supplicated to Allah at al-Mil and

Jamarat, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you halted in Arafat, did you intend to recognize Allah, Glorified is He, and His knowledge, and recognize that He is holding on the record of your deeds and that He has full acquaintance with your hidden and secrets?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you mounted Jabal al-Rahma, did you recognize that Allah would have mercy upon every believing man and woman and see to every Muslim male and female?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you were on Nemira, [192]did you recognize that your advices and warnings to people are fruitless unless they are originated from Allah's instructions?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you stopped at al-Alam and an-Nemirat, [193] did you recognize that these signs would testify for your acts of obedience (to God) and would keep you like the Keeping Angels whose mission is to keep you according to Allah's instructions?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really stop on Arafat, mount

Jabal al-Rahma, recognize Nemira, supplicate to Allah, or stop at an-Nemirat. You passed by the Two Signs (al-Alamain) [194], offered a two-Rakat prayer before so, walked in Muzdelifa, picked up pebbles there, and passed by al-Mash'ar al-Haram, [195] did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you offered the prayer, did you intend it to be thanksgiving… that saves from every hardship and alleviates all difficulties?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you walked between the Two Signs without turning to right or left, did you intend not to turn away from the right religious with heart, tongue, or other organs?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you walked in Muzdelifa and picked up pebbles, did you intend to get rid of every act of disobedience and every item of ignorance and to fix in your behaviors every item of knowledge and good deed?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you passed by al-Mash'ar al-Haram, did you intend to carry in heart the slogan of the pious people and the God-fearing ones?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you did not really pass by the Two Signs, offer a two-Rakat prayer, walk in al-Muzdelifa, pick up pebbles there, or pass by al-Mash'ar al-Haram. You reached in Mina, threw the pebbles (i.e. performed the Ramy al-Jamarat), had your hair cut, slaughtered your sacrificed animal, offered prayer in Kheif Mosque, returned to Mecca, and performed Tawaf al-Ifadha, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, I did.

The Imam: As you arrived in Mina and threw these pebbles, did you feel that you achieved your aim and that your Lord would settle all your needs?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you threw these pebbles, did you intend to stone Eblis, your enemy, and challenge him through your precious Hajj?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you shaved your head, did you intend to purify yourself from all filths and liabilities of people that lie on your shoulders, and to get rid of sins as if your mother had just given birth of you?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you offered prayer in Kheif Mosque, did you intend that you would never fear anything except Allah and the responsibilities of your (past) sins and that you would hope for

nothing except Allah’s mercy?

Shibli: As you slaughtered your sacrificial animal, did you intend to cut off the throat of greed by clinging to the reality of piety, and to follow the exemplary tradition of Ibrahim (a.s) who intended to slaughter his dear son (so as to carry our God’s order)?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: As you returned to Mecca and performed Tawaf al-Ifadha, did you intent to supply yourself with Allah’s mercy, return to the obedience to Him, cling to His love, perform all His precepts, and seek nearness to Him?

Shibli: No, I did not.

The Imam: In that case, you neither reached Mina, nor did you throw these pebbles on Satan, nor did you shave your head, nor did you perform the rituals of the Hajj, nor did you offer prayer in Kheif Mosque, nor did you perform Tawaf al-Ifadha, nor did you offer sacrifice for the Lord. Go back, you did not perform Hajj.

As he heard these words, Shibli wept heavily for the shortcomings of his performance of Hajj and decided to perform idea Hajj the next year, and he did. [196]

Imam Sadiq’s full instruction on Hajj

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: When you intend to go on Hajj pilgrimage, empty your heart for sake of Allah, Glorified is He, of any preoccupation, which makes you unmindful of Him. Entrust all your affairs to the Creator and rely on Him for what you do and you do

not. Submit yourself to the divine fate, decision, and destiny. Say farewell to the world, comfort, and people.

Discharge what you owe others. Do not rely on your provision, means of transportation, friends, physical power, youth, and wealth, for Allah may turn all of them as your enemies so that you will know there is no power or option but with Allah without whose assistance no one can succeed.

Then be prepared for Hajj like one who has no hope of returning home. Behave well with the co-travelers. Observe prayer timings and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (saw), perform what is your duty on courtesy, patience, tolerance, gratitude, compassion, generosity, and self-sacrifice all the time.

Then purify yourself with the water of repentance, put on the garment of truthfulness, sincerity, humbleness, and modesty.

Get rid of whatever keeps you away from Allah's remembrance and obedience to Him.

Say Labbayk to Allah with pure, flawless, and chaste heart while you have laid hold on the firmest handle.

Circumambulate the throne with your heart among the angels in the same way as you circumambulate the House with other Muslims.

Perform Harwala (fast pace); that is escape from carnal desires with all your power and strength.

Come out of your ignorance and wrongdoings when leaving Mecca

for Mina and never desire what is not lawful or you or not worthy of.

Confess of your wrongdoings in Arafat, renew your covenant with Allah, Exalted is He, on His Oneness and approach Him.

Fear Him Muzdalifah and make your soul ascend to heaven by climbing up the mountain.

Cut the throat of carnal desires and greed by offering animal sacrifice.

Throw away lust, miserliness, meanness, and all blameworthy acts through Ramy al-Jamarat.

Do away with the internal and external flaws when shaving your head.

Enter the sanctuary of Allah, Exalted is He, by ridding yourself of all desires when entering the Sacred Precinct.

Visit the House in order to honor its Owner and to know His glory and magnanimity.

Caress the Black Stone while you are content with what He has given you and you have become humble before His greatness.

Say farewell to everything save Allah in the last circumambulation.

Purify your soul and prepare for meeting Allah by staying in Safa.

Be fair-minded and dissolve yourself in Allah's Attributes when you

are in Marwa.

Be firm on and faithful to the pledge you have given to Allah by which you have performed your Hajj until the Day of Judgment.

Be it known to you that what the reason Allah has made Hajj obligatory and has allocated it to Himself by saying, "… and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, upon every one who is able to undertake the journey to it. (The Holy Qur'an; 3:97)," and the Holy Prophet (saw) has devised its rites in this way, is to remind us of death, grave, being raised to life, and the Day of Judgment. [197]

An analogy between man's life and the Hajj rites

A precise study of the philosophy of the Hajj rites reveals that man's whole life is like full Hajj. The Hajj rites are symbols of different stages of a wise man's life. Islam says: O man, you are a traveler who has come to the 'Mecca' of this world to perform the Hajj rites. This world is a seventy-eight year old place of circumambulation. Like Mecca, this world can lead you to Paradise. It is, in the words of Imam Ali (a.s), "the marketing place for those devoted to Allah. Herein they earned mercy and herein they acquire Paradise by way of profit." [198] Mecca is the mother of cities and the Holy Qur'an is the founder of human civilizations and culture in its real sense. Man derives inspiration from Mecca, goes through spiritual changes, attains the knowledge of God, gives positive response to God's call, returns to Mecca, and takes shelter in the Ka'aba and appreciates his kind mother for all the blessings given to him.

Not only does man start his intellectual and spiritual journey from Mecca so as to reach perfection, but also the earth started moving

from the Ka’aba in the course of perfection. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Surely, Allah the Honorable the Glorified stimulated the earth from beneath the Ka’aba towards Mina and then from Mina towards Arafat and there from towards Mina.” [199]

In the previous hadith, Imam Sadiq (a.s) used the Arabic word ‘daħa’ as the main verb of the statement. This word, however, has many indications. It may means ‘to stimulate’, ‘to expand’, ‘to put into motion’, ‘to drive’, or ‘to roll’. [200] If we throw a ball on the ground, we will see that it will have both rotation and transitional movement. This meaning of ‘daha’ is compatible with rotational and transitional movement of the earth as held by astrologers. Therefore, the earth in its rotational movement starts moving from the Ka’aba towards the eastern points. Interestingly, both Mina and Arafat are located on the eastern side. Hence, the earth rotates from the Ka’aba and completes its rotation in that point. [201]

From what we have said, it is inferred that the earth too performs the Hajj rites willingly: “*Then He (the Lord) directed Himself to the heaven and it is a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 41:11)

“*And the earth, He expanded it after that. He brought forth from it its water and its pasturage. And the mountains, He made them firm, a provision for you and for your cattle.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 79:30-3)

These Qur’anic Verses implicitly say: O man, be aware! In the same way that the earth moves eastward in the course of perfection, you to must start your intellectual and spiritual journey towards the Orient of knowledge of God from the Ka’aba.

The Hajj rites are analogous to different stages of man's life. A man when born is like a traveler who has entered the 'Mecca' of the world after traversing the loins of fathers and wombs of mothers, suffering many hardships in his path but he has not yet reached the so-called Miqat. When he reaches puberty and maturity, he has entered Miqat; hence, he should put on Ihram and become duty-bound before God, give positive response to God's call and observe what is lawful and what is unlawful until he completes the Hajj-like stages of his life. The leader of the caravan of Hajj is a prophet or imam throughout history. Today too, the leader of this caravan is Imam Mahdi (a.s) and each of us is engaged in performing one stage of the Hajj rites.

Some of us have entered the 'Mecca' of this world and are going through childhood. Some others have reached Miqat and they are saying, Labbayk. Some others have gone farther and have settled on Mount Arafat (knowledge of God). Some of us have reached al-Mash'ar, that is, we have reached the highest degree of insight and intellectual in a way we will say:.

O world, O world, Get away from me. Why do you present yourself to me? Or are you eager for me? You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other persons. I have no concern with you. I have divorced you thrice whereafter there is no restitution. [202]

Others have gone through this stage and have rushed to place of sacrifice, that is, they have sacrificed this world for sake of God. By caressing the Black Stone and through the love of God, they have reached the highest degree of pleasure in the universe. Some people too have completed their Hajj rites or are in the last stage of

their life and in the throes of death. They are waiting to see the result of their Hajj (deeds), failure or success. There are those who are buried in graves, though purgatory, and another caravan has settled in their tent performing their Hajj.

Notes:

[190] See *Maqamat al-Hariri*; 31st Maqama

[191] It is recommended for the performers to leave for Mina on the night of Arafa.

[192] Nemira is a mountain added to Mount Arafat

[193] Al-Alam and an-Nemirat are signs of the Holy Precinct found on Mount Nemira

[194] The two signs are two cols located between Mount Arafat and al-Mash'ar al-Haram.

[195] It seems that al-Mash'ar al-haram, here, is a reference to a mountain lying in al-Muzdelifa. To mount this mountain is a recommended rite among the Hajj rites.

[196] See *Mustadrak al-Wasaail*; vol. 2 p.186-7, Section 17, Hadith 5

[197] See *Misbah ash-Sharia*; section 21

[198] See *Nahjul Balagha*; sermon 130.

[199] See *al-Kafi*; vol. 4 section Hajj, p. 189, hadith 3

[200] See *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'aan*; vol. 20 p.292

[201] See ash-Shehristani's *al-Hay'atu wa'l-Islam*

[202] This statement is Imam Ali's. See *Nahjul Balagha*; saying 77

Visitation

Visitation to The Holy Shrine of God's Messenger

Thanks to God we have had the honor to visit the House of God and completed the Hajj rites. We now will go to Medina to visit the tombs of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Imams (a.s). We approach their holy shrines, which are full of mercy and a fount of blessings: "O my chiefs, O my masters, I turn to Allah through you, O my Imams, my supporters on the days of my destitution. I seek your advocacy before Allah, I request you to speak in my favor before Allah, obtain pardon for me from Allah, and deliver me from my sins, through my love of you and nearness to you, obtain deliverance from me from Allah. O my chiefs, O close friends of Allah." [203]

Love for The Ahl Ul-Bayt is reward of Prophethood

According to the Holy Qur'an, the love for the household of the Holy Prophet (saw) as the reward of Prophethood is obligatory on the ummah: "*Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 42:23)

According to traditions reported by both the Shia and Sunnah, the word 'near relatives' has been interpreted as the household of the Messenger of Allah (saw). Hence, love of them is aimed at being guided under their heavenly light, attaining eternal happiness, and getting rid of the bonds of Satan. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says: "*Say: I do not ask you aught in return except that he who will, may take the way to his Lord.*" (25:57)

Taking the way to God, according to traditions, can be realized only under the shelter of the Ahl ul-Bayt; therefore , courtesy to them is in the interest of the ummah and not in the interest of the household as

the Holy Qur'an expressly says: "*Say: Whatever reward I have asked of you, that is only for yourselves.*" (34:47)

Wilayat makes the Hajj rites perfect

Consensus among the Shiites is that God's acceptance of Muslims' deeds depends on belief in the Imamate of Imam Ali and the Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s). Traditions related to this matter have reached us through both Shiite and Sunni reference books by successive hearsay. [204]Suleiman Aamash quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) and his honorable fathers as saying: "The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: O Ali, you are the commander of the faithful and the Imam of the pious.

O Ali, you are the master of the vicegerents, inheritor of the knowledge of prophets, the best of the truthful, and the head of the foremost in faith.

O Ali, you are the husband of the chiefess of the world women and you are the successor of the Messengers.

O Ali, you are the master of the believers.

O Ali, you are the proof of Allah among all human beings after me. Whoever loves you deserves Paradise and whoever antagonizes you will enter into fire.

O Ali, (I swear) by One Who appointed me as prophet and chosen me from among people, if a man worships Allah for thousand years, his worship will not be accepted by Allah save with belief in your Imamate and that of your sons. Belief in your Imamate is not accepted save by disavowal of your enemies and those of your

progeny. Archangel Gabriel (a.s) informed me of it. Whoever accepts it is a believer and whoever denies it is an unbeliever.” [205]

Abu-Hamza reported that Imam Sajjad (a.s) asked, ‘Which areas are the best?’ I answered, ‘Allah, His Messenger, and son of His Messenger know best.’ He (a.s) then said: The best area –in the world- is that lying between the Rukn (corner of the Ka’aba) and Maqam (standing-place of Prophet Ibrahim). If a man lives as long as Prophet Noah –nine hundred and fifty years- and spends all this period with fasting during days and worshipping Allah during nights in that area, all his acts of worship will be worthless unless he believes in our wilaya –divine leadership-.

Acceptable Hajj

Meaath ibn Kathir reported: It was big crowds on that season of Hajj when I approached Imam Sadiq (a.s) and said, ‘Really, the performers of Hajj are so many.’ He (a.s) turned his sight towards them and asked me to be nearer to him. As I did, He (a.s) said: They are just like scum that waves bring from everywhere. By Allah I swear, true Hajj is only yours. Certainly, Allah will accept your Hajj only. [206]

Al-Harith ibn al-Mughira reported: I was sitting near Imam Sadiq (a.s) when somebody came in and asked, ‘Son of Allah’s Messenger, the performers of Hajj this year were so many.’ The Imam answered (a.s): Let they be so many or so few. By Allah I swear, He will not accept but the Hajj that you perform, and none will be forgiven except you. [207]

Abu’l-Jaroud reported: I said to Imam Baqir (a.s) in Mecca, or Mina, that the performers of Hajj were so many. He (a.s) said: In fact, they

are so few. None will be forgiven except your companions and you, and nobody’s act will be admitted (by God) except your companions’ and yours. [208]

Mansour as-Sayqal reported: I was with Imam Sadiq (a.s) in his pavilion in Mina (during the season of Hajj) when he looked at people and said: They eat, dress, and marry illegally. But you eat, dress, and marry legally. By Allah, it is only you whose Hajj is valid and whose deeds are accepted. [209]

Zureyq reported: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the best deed after the recognition of God. He (a.s) said:

Nothing after the recognition of Allah may mount to prayer. Nothing, after the recognition of Allah and the prayer, may mount to zakat. Nothing after these may mount to fasting. Nothing after these may mount to Hajj. The opening and the end of all these is the recognition of us (i.e. the divine leadership of the Imams). [210]

Prophet Mohammad (saw) said: He who wants to hold fast to the Firmest Handle must cling to love for Ali and my household –the Ahl ul-Bayt-.

Visiting The Prophet’s Tomb

Imam Reza (a.s) says: Then you will visit the tomb of Mohammad (saw), for the Holy Prophet has said: “Whoever performs the Hajj rites but does not visit my tomb will be unkind to me.” And then visit the tombs of the Sayyids (a.s) [211]

Imam Baqir (a.s) looked at those who were circumambulating the Holy House and said: They are ordained to circumambulate (the

House) then come to us to show us their love (loyalty) for us and then offer their support for us. [212]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says: “Start Hajj with Mecca and complete it with us.” [213]

Yahya ibn Yessar reported: During the Hajj, we passed by Imam Sadiq (a.s) who said to us: O Pilgrims of the House of Allah, visitors of His Prophet’s tomb, and adherents (Shia) of Mohammad’s household, congratulations! [214]

Al-Hasan ibn al-Washa reported: I asked Imam Reza (a.s) about the reward of him who visits the tomb of any of the Imams (a.s), and he answered: He (who visits the tomb of any of the Imams) will be rewarded as same as him who visits the tomb of Abu-Abdilah (Imam Hussein) (a.s) that is Paradise, I swear it by Allah. [215]

“He who comes to visit our tombs after our decease will have the same reward of him who visited us in our lifetime. He who fights our enemy will be regarded as if he fought alongside us. He who loves those who love us will love us. He who pleases a believer will indeed please us. He who helps a poor man belonging to us will be recompensed by our grandfather Mohammad (saw).” [216]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (saw) as saying: “Allah has assigned a group of angels to guard Fatima (a.s) in front, behind, and on the left and right sides. Those angels are constantly accompanying her in her life, her grave after her death, and send greetings to her father, her husband, and her progeny. Therefore, whoever visits me after my death will be regarded as if he indeed visited me in my lifetime, whoever visits Fatima will be regarded as if

he indeed visited me, whoever visits Ali Ibn Abi Talib will be regarded as if he indeed visited Fatima, whoever visits Hussein will be regarded as if he has indeed visited Ali (a.s), and whoever visits their progeny will be regarded as if he indeed visited those two honorable ones.” [217]

Imam Sadiq, on the authority of his fathers, reported that the Messenger of God addressed to Imam Ali (a.s): O Abu’l-Hasan, Allah has certainly made your descendants’ and your tombs areas and yards of Paradise. He, Glorified and Elevated is He, has also caused the hearts of some choice, pure servants of Him to yearn for them and tolerate humiliation and harm for you. They therefore will construct and frequent your tombs for nothing more than seeking nearness to Allah and showing love for His Messenger (saw). O Ali, those (servants) will be granted exclusively my Intercession, will come to my Divine Pool, and will be my visitors and neighbors in Paradise.

O Ali, he who constructs and takes care of your tombs will be regarded as if he helped (Prophet) Solomon son of (Prophet) David construct the Beit ul-Maqdis (the Sacred Mosque of Jerusalem). He who visits the tombs of your descendants will have the reward of seventy times of recommended Hajj and will be released from his sins as if he has just been given birth by his mother, and these rewards will be continuous until he returns home.

O Ali, enjoy the good tidings and convey them to your adherents and followers—you will be enjoying the bliss whose like has never been seen, heard, or even imagined. But there will come some people who dishonor the visitors of your tombs in the same way as a prostitute is dishonored. Those people are the evilest individuals of

my ummah; they will not be granted my Intercession and will not be allowed to approach my Divine Pool (on the Day of Resurrection). [218]

Peace Be Upon You, O Messenger of Allah and Upon Your Pure and Immaculate Household

O Medina, how honorable you are for holding the pure body of the superior of the creatures, source of pride of all beings, and most beloved of Allah in your arms. O Medina, you have amazed not only the terrestrial but also the celestial beings with your glory for becoming the descending place of God's favor and blessings.

"*Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! Call for Divine blessings on him and salute him with a becoming salutation.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 33:56)

This illuminated garden, which is as Paradise in the eyes of the pilgrims, is the holy shrine of the Messenger of Allah—Prophet Mohammad, may the blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny. Every Muslim has the wish to visit the tomb of the Holy Prophet (saw) at least once in his lifetime. Thanks to God for giving us the honor of visiting this holy shrine.

Souls of True Believers keep on living after death and they are aware of all events

Based on logical proof, man's soul keeps on living after departing from the body. It has also been proved that the souls of true believers, prophets, and Imams, after departing from their bodies and going to heaven, become more illuminated, their knowledge of this world become vaster, and their influence on the world become more effective. About those martyred for God's sake, the Holy Qur'an says: "*And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as*

dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord." (3:169)

The Holy Qur'an has likened the unbelievers to the dead: "*Indeed, they despair of the hereafter as the unbelievers despair of those in tombs.*" (60:13)

Sheikh Mufid, may Allah be pleased with him, in his book titled al-Maqalaat, writes down: God's Messenger and the Imams of his household are, adfter decease, ware of the state of their followers in this world, and no state of their followers is hidden from them. God, Exalted is He, informs them about all these matters. They hear the supplications of those who speak to them in their dignified, handsome shrines due to one of God's special favors so that He will distinguish them from others. They, too, are aware of the supplications of those who are far away. [219]

Abdullah ibn Bukeir quotes Imam Sadiq (a.s) as saying in relation to Imam Hussein (a.s): Most surely, he looks at the visitors of his tomb and knows them by the name of themselves, their fathers, and the provisions they have with them better than a father might know his own children. He looks at the supplicants favorably and asks forgiveness for them, saying: O Suppliant, if you know what Allah has prepared for you, your happiness will exceed your sorrows, for he asks forgiveness for every wrongdoing and sin of the supplicant." [220]

Therefore, we realize that the special favors of God's disciples are felt within the precincts of the Imams' holy shrines more than anywhere else. Hence, we should expose ourselves to such favors and say: "My father, mother, family, property, and possessions are

at your disposal. Allah and you bear witness that I believe in you, thereby have faith in you: I renounce your enemies, and that by which they have disowned you, I am fully aware of your glorious purpose, and that which leads astray in your hostility; I am your friend, and a friend of your friends, I dislike your enemies and strive against their designs, I am at peace with those who make peace with you, I take the field against those who march against you, I accept as true that which acknowledges your truth, I prove false that which takes a stand against you, I follow in your footsteps. I am fully aware of your rights and privileges, I recognize your superiority over others, I carry and preserve your knowledge, I take refuge under your prospective shelter, I respond to you, I know for sure that you will come back, I believe in your promised return, I anticipate and look for your (just and fair) order, I pray for your (good) administration, I hold fast to that which you have said, I carry out your orders, I take shelter in your neighborhood, I make a visit to do homage and praise you, for me your 'resting abode' are sanctuaries; in the court of the Almighty you are my advocates, I seek His nearness through you, for seeking fulfillment of my wants and desire, under all circumstances, I follow you to make headway." [221]

Dust from Messengers' footsteps is life-giving

About the story of the Golden Calf of Samiri, the Holy Qur'an says: "*He said: What was then your object, O Samiri? He said: I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful of the dust from the footsteps of the messenger, and then I threw it in the casting.*" (20:95-6)

We should reflect on the Qur'anic truth that the life of an angel is so effective and influential that when he walks on the earth as a human being, the dust under his foot becomes a source of life in a dead being. The dust of the tombs of God's disciples, especially the tomb

of the master of the martyrs; Imam Hussein (a.s), has a healing, life-giving peculiarity. When God gives such an effect to the dust under Gabriel's foot, He can give the same to the dust of the grave of the Messenger and his household who are more honorable that archangels: "*He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 3:74)

Evidently, the soul of an imperfect man has a very limited activity while that of perfect men, like prophets and Imams, has infinite activity so as healing the patients, meeting the request of the needy, guiding those who go astray, and solving unsolvable problems are very easy to them.

Now we are facing the Holy Shrine of the Messenger of Allah. It is an opportune time for expressing our love and need for him in view of his sublime spiritual position. He has been described as mercy for the worlds: "*And most surely you conform to sublime morality.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 68:4)

"*To the believers, he is compassionate, merciful.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 9:128)

"*As for him who asks, do not chide.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 93:10)

"*And when those who believe in Our communications come to you, say: Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 6:54)

In the holy shrine of the Messenger of God (saw), we have an

excellent opportunity to raise our hands of need before the house of his daughter (a.s) for no one leaves this holy shrine without having his request fulfilled. In the Holy Qur'an, God praises the Ahl ul-Bayt for giving their food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive in an excellent way: "*And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: we only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks*." (The Holy Qur'an; 78:8-9)

After describing blessings in Paradise, God says: "*Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving shall be recompensed.*" (The Holy Qur'an; 78:22)

Therefore, we should stand before this door—door of Allah, and supplicate from the bottom of our hearts, saying: "It is on account of you that Allah pulls us out of the depth of degradation, sets us free from the clutches of hardships, takes us to safety from precipice of annihilation and from falling down into the Hell." [222]

Shiites are in search of Fatima's grave in Medina

Where is the grave of Fatima? Where was she buried? Is it in Baqi cemetery, between the mimbar (pulpit) and grave of the Holy Prophet (saw) or in her own house? Where is the grave of the honorable lady before whose arrival the Holy Prophet (saw) would rise up, welcome her, kiss her hand, and give his own place to her? [223]

With his polite behavior, the Messenger of God intended to show part of the heavenly nature of his daughter so that the ummah would realize her worthy position and reach eternal happiness through infinite blessings of her holiness.

The Messenger of God (saw) is quoted -by both Shiite and Sunni Muslims- as saying: “Fatima is part of me and I am part of her. He who hurts her is hurting me and whoever hurts me is hurting Allah.”

“O Fatima, surely Allah becomes wrathful when you are wrathful and pleased when you are pleased.”

To hurt Lady Fatima is to hurt the Messenger of God, and to hurt the Messenger of God entails God’s curse: “*Surely as for those who hurt Allah and His Apostle, Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a chastisement bringing disgrace.*” (The Holy Qur’an; 33:57)

Since we do not exactly know where the great lady of Islam was buried, we shed tears on the earth of Baqi cemetery for the likelihood that her grave is there, and say: Peace be upon you, O’ daughter of the Messenger of Allah.

We sometimes stand between the grave and mimbar of the Holy Prophet (saw) for the visitation of her grave, based on the saying of the Messenger of God (saw): The area between my grave and mimbar is a garden of Paradise.

We sometimes go behind the Holy Prophet’s grave, where the house of Fatima (a.s), for salutation. We shed tears by the graves of Fatima (a.s) and her sons until the reappearance of her eleventh progeny, Imam Mahdi under whose just rule we will calm down.

Al-Baqi cemetery, the sacred hall of audience

This is Baqi cemetery where thousands of great religious personalities, companions, wives, and children of the Holy Prophet (saw) are buried. What gives dignity to this cemetery is the pure bodies of four Imams (a.s). For this reason, the Ahl ul-Bayt's followers turn to Baqi lovingly during the Hajj season and weep bitterly though there is no mausoleum and the graves are at ground level: O Allah, I believe in the sanctity of the one buried in this holy shrine in his/her absence as in his/her presence. I know that Your Messenger and vicegerents are alive and given sustenance by You. They see my standing place, hear my words, and answer my salutation. [224]

The four Imams who have given dignity to Baqi cemetery are Imam Hasan, Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, and Imam Sadiq (a.s): O Allah, grant us their visitation in this world and their intercession in the Hereafter.

The Martyrs of the Battle of Uhud

This religion under whose shade we have taken shelter and in the light of which we have come to know God, the Holy Qur'an, and the Ahl ul-Bayt have not reached us easily. Only does God know how many devoted persons sacrificed their lives, suffered hardships, and went through calamities in order to safeguard this religion and hand it over to us as it is. We, who hear the life-giving call of 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is His Messenger,' from mosques' minarets, hold glorious congregational prayer in mosques, and hold mourning ceremonies for Imam Hussein (a.s), are rarely aware of the tragic events that happened to Islam and Muslims in the early days of our religion. Hence, it is necessary for our younger generation to study the history of the

early days of Islam to see what sacrifices were made in defense of Islam and the Holy Qur'an. We should both follow their ways and visit their graves to pay homage to them.

Some of those pioneers who sacrificed their lives in the way of God are the martyrs of the battle of Uhud, may Allah be pleased with them, who bravely fought for Islam when it, as well as the Messenger of God were isolated, lost their lives, found eternal life, and made us indebted to them forever. Therefore, we stand by their graves and say: "Peace be upon you, O helpers of the religion of Allah and helpers of His Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny). Peace be upon you for your forbearance. What an excellent habitation the Hereafter is. I bear witness that Allah has chosen you for His religion and for Him Messenger. I bear witness that you fought for the sake of Allah a true fighting and defended the religion of Allah and His Prophet." [225]

The honorable uncle of the Holy Prophet, Hamza, had an important role in helping the religion of God and His Messenger. Hence, among the martyrs of Uhud, he has such great rank about whom the Holy Prophet (saw) has said: Whoever visits my grave but does not visit the grave of my uncle Hamza, has indeed been unkind to me.

So, we should pay homage to him by saying: "Peace be upon you, O uncle of the Messenger of Allah. Peace be upon you, O the best of martyrs. Peace be upon you, O the lion of Allah and the lion of the Messenger of Allah… and you are one of those with whom Allah has commanded me to have relation, to whom Allah has enjoined me to do good, to whose virtue and friendship He has guided me, and with whose visitation and asking my needs from him, Allah has inspired me." [226]

Conclusion of the journey

Here our spiritual journey comes to an end. God willing, we will return to our countries with our hearts purified from wrongdoings and our souls illuminated with the light of knowledge of God and His friends. We ask God through His Sacred House, the affinity of His Messenger and the pure and immaculate Household, and His grace to accept our Hajj, and make the rest of our lives safe from the temptations of Satan under the shelter of Imam Mahdi (a.s). Also, safeguard our children from moral deviations.

O God, send peace and blessings upon Mohammad and the progeny of Mohammad (saw) and grant us pilgrimage to Your Sacred House and visitation of the graves of Your Prophet and the Imams (a.s) in every year. Do not deprive us, O Lord, of visiting such dignified and sacred places.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and greetings of Allah be upon Mohammad and his pure and immaculate progeny.

Notes:

[203] Duaa at-Tawassul

[204] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 166

[205] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 199 (as quoted from Ibn Shathan's al-Manaaqib)

[206] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 172 (as quoted from Sheikh at-Tusi's al-Amaali).

[207] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 185 (as quoted from al-Mahaasin).

[208] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 196 (as quoted from Bisharat al-Mustafa).

[209] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 199 (as quoted from Sheikh Saduq's Fadhaail ush-Shia).

It seems that 'they' in this narration refers to those who antagonize the

Prophet's household, and the reason why their eating, dressing, and marriage are illegal is because they refrain from paying the obligatory tax of Khums. In this regard many narrations are reported. Imam Ali (a.s) is quoted as saying: People perish in matters related to their eating and marriage. This is because they do not fulfill our rights that are divinely incumbent upon them. Our Shia are released from the fulfillment of such rights. (see al-Wafi; vol. 2 Section: Khums, p.42) . Imam Sadiq (a.s) is quoted as saying: All people are plunging in the wronging against us. We however have released our Shia –adherents- from being involved in such wronging.

[210] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 202 (as quoted from Sheikh at-Tusi's al-Amaali).

[211] See Fiqh ur-Ridha

[212] See Mustadrak ul-Wasaail; Kitab al-Hajj Section: Visatation p. 189

[213] See Mustadrak ul-Wasaail; Kitab al-Hajj Section: Visatation p. 189

[214] See al-Kafi; vo. 4 Kitab al-Hajj, p. 549

[215] See Mustadrak ul-Wasaail; Kitab al-Hajj, section: Visitation p. 189

[216] See Mustadrak ul-Wasaail; Kitab al-Hajj

[217] See Mustadrak ul-Wasaail; Kitab al-Hajj, section: Visitation p. 189

[218] See al-Wafi; vol. 2 section: Ziyarat p. 196

[219] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 301

[220] See Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 27 p. 300 (as quoted from Kamil uz-Ziyarat)

[221] Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira

[222] Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira

[223] See al-Muhaddith al-Qummi's Bayt ul-Ahzaan; 8

[224] Part of the Permission of Entering the Holy Shrines (as quoted from al-Kaf'ami's)

[225] Ziyarat of the martyrs of (the battle of) Uhud

[226] Ziyarat of Hamza